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A LECTURE

DELIVERED BY

THE REV. ÆN. MCD. DAWSON,

BEFORE THE

St. Vincent de Paul Society of the Cathedral Parish of Ottawa.

LONDON:

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1865.

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PREFACE.

It may not be out of place to intimate that the following pages have been committed to the Press, in obedience to the wishes of the Society before which the eulogium of St. Vincent de Paul was pronounced. To give an adequate idea of the life and labours of so good and great a man, within the necessarily narrow limits of a Lecture, is more than can be well aspired to. The mere report of a discourse which the zeal of the charitable Brotherhood caused to be pronounced, may, nevertheless, convey to the enquiring mind, some idea of the extraordinary personal sanctity—and the all but incredible works of St. Vincent, which left their impress on his own age, and bequeathed to future generations, together with valuable and lasting institutions, the most hallowed and endearing memories.

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Of the incalculably great number of eminently good Christians, whose sanctity has adorned the Church, and whose labors have enlightened and improved the world, none can be said to have a better claim to the reverence and gratitude of mankind than Vincent of Paul. In the Church's long catalogue of honored names, there is not one that has not been illustrated by the most heroic deeds; but, whilst all have bequeathed to succeeding ages, the sweet memories of their stainless lives, whilst the odour of their virtues throughout all time, ascends, like fragrant incense, and even, as a rich propitiatory offering to the dwelling place of infinite mercy, there is no Saint, who by his numerous and enduring works of Charity, has more completely realized the fundamental precept of the law,—that law of grace and love, which wills not that any should ever be excluded from its favor, or forbidden to participate in the full measure of its redemption.

Vincent of Paul had not yet passed the age, at which the occupations, the amusements, the frivolities of childhood, engross the whole being, when he gave proof of qualities which merited for him the blessing of education. It was not until his latent genius became to a certain extent manifest to his intelligent father, that those sacrifices were resolved on, which prepared for the apostleship of truth, one of its ablest champions.

As if conscious of his destiny, Vincent pursued with ardour, those studies from which minds of the highest order have ever sought guidance as well as knowledge, and in due time, obeying the call of Heaven, he joined the ranks of the Christian Priesthood.

And now, a Priest for ever, according to an order more holy than that of Aaron, he will hasten to set forth, with giant power, upon his great career. But no. Like the richest metal that is reserved for the

noblest uses, he must be cast into the crucible. The ordeal of tribulation awaits him. The trial is as of fire, but it consumes not; against his soul of proof it is powerless.

Whilst on a short voyage along the shores of his native land, he is seized by Turkish Pirates, and borne away into exile and captivity. He is reduced to slavery,—sold and re-sold,—to-day the property of one Heathen master, to-morrow the chattel of another. From this cruel lot neither his intellect, nor his superior education, nor his sacred character could save him. The blind and obdurate Turk knows no respect. The most enlightened, the most accomplished, the most holy, are to him no better than beasts of burthen. In such hopeless bondage, Vincent of Paul could only pray, could only suffer, and, he prays with the fervour, he suffers with the resignation of a Christian martyr. Can we be too thankful that that power, which he fails even to modify or soften, is now broken,—that the sick expiring Turk, now implores in his death agony, the aid of that Christian community which he had so long defied, and in the persons of many of its members, insulted and oppressed?

The faithful Christian cannot be all a slave. No power can chain the mind. Paul of old preached eloquently in his bonds, and made his oppressors tremble. Our apostle is alike consumed with zeal. No dread of new evils can bind his tongue. The beauty of God's house inspires him. He proclaims its glories. Its worst enemies listen and are won. A Moslem woman declares that there is no God to compare with the God of the Christians. She loudly upbraids her renegade husband. "The God of Vincent was too good to be so foully abandoned." And this man so long hardened in iniquity enters into himself and resolves to return to the religion of his forefathers. A fitting time is chosen, and the renegade master, together with his Christian slave, are borne over the waves, in a fragile bark, beyond the reach of Turkish intolerance and persecution.

It is now given to Vincent of Paul, restored to his country, after three years of exile and bondage, to satisfy the great desire which never slept in his ardent mind. An unlooked for circumstance, which, whilst it brings him to St. Peter's Chair, opens for him a career of usefulness, with which nothing in modern times can bear comparison. Rome, ever true to her sublime mission, welcomes to her walls, this heroic witness of the truth, and sends him on her errand of peace, to the Court of France. Henry the Great fails not to appreciate the qualities of Vincent of Paul, and wills that he be raised to episcopal dignity. But the cruel and cowardly hand of an assassin deprives France and the world of the best of monarchs, and other, but not less

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noble destinies are prepared for the servant of God. Anxious to do good unobserved, in the shade of retirement, he devotes himself to the sick in the hospital of charity at Paris. Once more a counsellor of Rome finds out his merit. M. de Berulle visits the Institution. The patients are loud and unanimous in the praise of their pious and laborious Chaplain, and the cardinal insists that he shall consent to be named to a Royal Chaplaincy. Queen Margaret de Valois, in order to mark her appreciation of the learning and virtue of Vincent, as well as to make suitable provision for his more exalted position, immediately confers upon him the rich Abbey of Chaume. Now comes the greatest, the most formidable ordeal. The servant of God is crowned with honors. Riches are heaped on him in abundance. His society is courted by the great. Royalty even looks to him for knowledge and for counsel. This would have been sufficient to satisfy the most ambitious of men. But it fails to satisfy the man who has no ambition. If self-indulgence, if worldly preferment had been his object, he had surely nothing further to desire, for now, the world, its wealth and its glory are at his feet. But he dreads what he does not covet. He who had only grown in sanctity whilst humbled to the condition of a slave and to a vile association with degraded heathens, fears lest he may lose the grace of his holy state amid the dazzling glare of courtly splendour. There is in the vicinity of Paris, a parish so poor that for years no Pastor could be found to take charge of it. Vincent of Paul divests himself of his rich benefices, and only uses his great influence in order to procure his appointment to this obscure charge. At Clichy he devotes himself with unremitting vigilance, to the Parochial duties that have now devolved upon him. And not without the greatest success. Example comes to the aid of precept, and in a short time, a learned doctor thinks it no exaggeration to say, that the Parishioners of Clichy "universally lived like angels," pronouncing thus, the best eulogium of the Pastor, whilst he appears only to speak the praises of the flock. He is not long in this Parish, preaching assiduously, instructing youth, reconciling sinners, visiting the sick, consoling the afflicted, relieving the poor, restoring the peace of families, strengthening the weak, making himself all to all, in order to gain all to his Divine Lord, when a new labor requires all his energy. His Church is nearly in ruins, and without the necessary furniture and ornaments. His Parishioners are too poor even to repair it. In the face of this apparently insuperable difficulty, he conceives the design of rebuilding it entirely. And this important work he succeeds in accomplishing, not by means of any funds of his own, for all he possessed is already distributed among the poor, but, through the aid of generous families of the capital who are

in the habit of devoting their worldly goods to the cause of piety, and who gladly second the efforts of a man whose only objects are the greater good of his fellow-men and the glory of God.

But, he must soon be taken from a field of exertion where his zeal is crowned with the most abundant rewards. Not however, until his parish is so admirably ordered as to afford the greatest facilities for the successful labors of the Pastor who is destined to succeed him, does he yield to the representations of Cardinal de Berulle, his spiritual Director, and accept the responsibility of educating the children of M. de Gondi, general of the Galleys of France.

The high rank of the Gondis, no less than the important office held by the head of the family necessarily attracted many visitors. The inmates of the palace were also numerous. Thus were great inducements to worldly amusements hourly presented to the servant of God. But nothing can divert him from the great objects he never ceases to have in view—the good of souls,—the glory of God. In the midst of the gay and busy world, he lives secluded from the world. Far from the solitudes where devout men of old, sought refuge from dissipation and distraction, he leads the life of a father of the desert. Not unmindful of the duty he has undertaken, to form the minds of one of the most influential families of his country, he remembers at the same time, his vocation to the pastoral office. The Gondis are educated—qualified for the highest posts, to which their birth, in those times, entitled them. But the bread of instruction is no less dispensed to every member of the household. Not only is the Countess de Gondi, already so sincerely pious, consoled and encouraged to persevere in the better way which she has chosen, the humblest menial of the establishment shares alike in the apostolic solicitude of the truly good Pastor.

M. de Gondi himself becomes a cause of anxiety. In the age of St. Vincent there prevailed a practice which happily in our days, and especially in our favored country, by means of great social* as well as Christian influences, is no longer in vogue. Duelling was fashionable, and it was not held to be unchristian. Honor required the reparation of a death struggle; and devout men invoked the God of battles before quenching the fire of their quarrel in blood. In vain did Henry the Great legislate against duelling. The time for the extinction of a custom anti-social as it was anti-christian, had not yet come. A nobleman of the Court offends the high-born Count de Gondi. Is it fitting, is it reasonable that the head of so great a family—the son of the brave

* It is well known that our gracious Queen, by a wise and beneficent exercise of her great influence, has suppressed the unchristian practice of fighting duels in the British army, as well as among the people of Great Britain.

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Marshal de Retz, should bear the affront in silence? It cannot be. And de Gondi prepares for the mortal conflict by more than usually long and fervent prayer. Whilst he is thus engaged, Vincent of Paul approaches, and throwing himself at his feet, begs in all humility to be heard :

"I know on good authority, that you are going to fight a duel. I declare to you in the name of my Saviour whom you have just adored, that if you do not relinquish that wicked design, he will exercise his justice upon you and all your posterity." The Saint having uttered these words, with all the earnestness of true charity, retires, overwhelmed with grief and horror, but not without the purpose of adopting other means if this should fail. But the power with which he spoke, had been as that of an apostle delivering the messages of Heaven. Conscience is awakened, and M. de Gondi leaves his cause in the hands of Him who has said, "Vengeance is mine, and I will repay."

It would be superfluous to recount the apostolic labours of Vincent of Paul in the House of Gondi, and among the country people on the possessions of that family. Urged by the most extraordinary zeal, he resolves to devote himself more completely to the service of the poor and the salvation of souls. Father de Berulle, to whom he imparts his design, recognizes the uprightness of his intentions, and recommends that he should exercise the pastoral office at Chatillou les Dombes, a Parish that had been long neglected.

Nothing contributes so much to the renewing of faith and a spirit of piety, as a faithful and zealous preaching of the Word of God. Vincent of Paul accordingly, no sooner enters upon his new charge, than he renders available for the work of reformation which is so necessary, the gift of oratory which he possesses in all its perfection. The ignorant are enlightened, the wavering are reassured, the erring are reclaimed, conversions the most extraordinary and the most unlooked for, are occasioned by the eloquent and energetic preaching of the new Pastor. "With great power does he give testimony," even as did the inspired founders of the Church, and "none are able to resist the spirit and the wisdom that speaks.—(Acts v. and vii.)

Among the first who are moved by the eloquence of the good Pastor, are two ladies of rank, whose minds had been wholly engrossed by the frivolous amusements of the world. At first, they admire the great talents of the Preacher, but, a deeper impression is speedily made. They desire to confer with him, and are unable to withstand the force and unction of his words. Their conversion is complete. They are now as thoroughly devoted to the duties of religion as they had hitherto been to vain pleasure. Gaunt famine, with pestilence in its train,

comes to scourge the people of Chatillon. These ladies, as if inspired to be the tutelary angels of the place, pitch their tents beside its walls, and thence go forth by night, as in the day time, on their errands of mercy to the plague-struck inhabitants. The poor are supplied with food, and the sick with remedies. The people are profoundly moved. They can hardly refrain from tears, when they behold these delicately educated ladies "passing whole days and nights in the cottages, where death is seen in its most terrific forms."—(Collet.)

A nobleman of the Court of France, that Count de Rougemont, a slave to the fashion of the time, whose sword was ever ready to start from its scabbard, on occasion of the least real or imaginary affront, attracted by the great reputation of Vincent of Paul, desires to converse with him. The words of the Saint descend upon the soul of this obdurate man like the dews of Heaven upon a long parched soil. He is moved to sorrow, and bitterly bewailing his crimes, he, the hitherto unfeeling duelist, who had made so many tears to flow, now weeps in an agony of contrition. The Saint consoles him—moderates his fervor, and teaches him to confide in the all-atoning merits of our blessed Lord. No sacrifice is now too great for the repentant nobleman. He sells his estate of Rougemont, devoting the proceeds to the founding of pious and charitable establishments, or to the relief of indigence. Not satisfied with this act of self-denial, he wishes to divest himself of all his property, and reduce himself to a state of voluntary poverty. He is only dissuaded from this step, by his venerated Pastor, who represents that he will do more good by continuing to act as the steward of Divine Providence over his worldly possessions. His residence, the Chateau of Chandes, becomes a refuge and an hospital for the poor. He there ministers to their wants, with his own hands, and in his absence, which was not frequent, he causes them to be kindly tended by his domestics. Thus does a man whom the zeal and apostolic words of Vincent of Paul had snatched from the dangers of a wordly and wicked life, spend his days in doing good, and by the salutary discipline of self-denial, fit his soul for Heaven. He terminates, at last, a most useful and meritorious career, in the arms of the pious children of St. Francis.

The "testimony" of Vincent of Paul is indeed attended with "great power." Many heretics, of whom some are men of good education and high social position, return to the Church, whilst everywhere, throughout the Parish of Chatillon, strife and discord are put an end to, neighbours who had been at variance, reconciled, peace restored in families, from which, together with the practices of piety, it seemed to have been for ever banished.

If one thing more than another is calculated to illustrate the career of St. Vincent, it is the astonishing success with which he laboured to abolish litigation amongst his parishioners. He was not long amongst them, when he succeeded in putting a stop to no fewer than forty-two law-pleas. Who shall say that he did not thus acquire a claim to the grateful remembrance of all true Christians? Nothing militates so powerfully against the growth of Charity as the belief that without any breach of this divine law, or any violence to it, neighbour may pursue neighbour, as long as there is any trace of civil or human law to warrant such a course of proceeding. Vincent of Paul condemned this theory, and brought his people to understand that all who claim to be the children of Christ, must be ruled by his law. This law is, indeed, a law of love. But it is a jealous law, and will admit of no rival.

Such labours could not fail to be crowned with the Divine favor. The peace of Heaven now reigned accordingly, where hitherto, the demon of discord held undisputed sway. There might be poverty still at Chatillon, but its people enjoyed the delights of concord, together with all the endearing relations of Christian neighborhood. The good Pastor was blessed with a still more abundant reward. Here, amongst his village Parishioners, was he first inspired with an idea which was destined to be so fruitful, to confer on France and the world, inappreciable benefits, which daily extend as the wants of humanity increase, and find new fields of benevolent exertion, as new worlds are opened, and new sources of human misery arise. One day, as the charitable Pastor was preparing to address his congregation, he was asked to recommend to them a family at the distance of half a league from the town, that had been suddenly reduced to indigence, and at the same time visited with sickness. His words, prompted by his kindly feelings and by the divine principle of charity, fell not upon unwilling ears. Whilst repairing immediately after the conclusion of the service, to the scene of sickness and distress, he met on their way home, many of the Parishioners who had already conveyed to the afflicted family everything they could stand in need of—much more than was necessary for a considerable time. "This," said he, "is great, but not well regulated charity. These sick persons will have too many provisions at one time. Those which will not be immediately consumed, will be spoiled, and these poor people will soon be in the same necessity as before." But, it was not sufficient to represent that charity, in order to be efficient, must be judiciously applied. He also devised and proposed an arrangement, by which the family now so munificently relieved would be provided for, whilst their illness continued, and others when simi-

larly circumstanced, would find adequate care and assistance. Some ladies of wealth and piety adopted a system, which could not but prove fruitful of good. Others became interested in so good a work, and desired to be associated under the guidance of a rule laid down to them by the Saint. After three months' experience of this admirable plan, Vincent of Paul, with a view to the more permanent establishment of the charitable association, submitted it to his ecclesiastical superiors, and the "Confraternity of Charity" receives the sanction of the Church. Thus solemnly authorized, the work of charity extends to the neighbouring towns. It is established at Bourg, Villefreux, Joigni, Montmirel, and some thirty Parishes dependant on the house of Gondi. Paris, also, claims it. But not only must the capital of France enjoy this beneficent institution. Foreign countries also will possess it,—Lorraine,—Savoy,—Italy. Who shall tell the hundreds and thousands in all lands, that are comforted and relieved by the sublime idea of St. Vincent?

But the time was come when Vincent of Paul must yield to powerful influences, and enter upon a higher and more extended sphere of duty. The house of Gondi, with the aid of Cardinal Berulle, once more prevailed. In this change of position were visible the purposes of Heaven. If the all-ruling Wisdom once more guided the steps of the humble and holy man to the mansions of the great, it was not without an all bounteous view to the interests of the lowly and the poor. In an age when birth conferred so many rights, it was of no slight importance that the children of the noblest should be taught the duties that became their state. And if at a later day, when Vincent of Paul, with that unfailing charity which never ceased to mark his career, was laying the foundations of those benevolent institutions which were destined to survive him, and minister so munificently to the relief and consolation of unborn generations, an Archbishop of Paris as well as a Cardinal of Rome were ever ready to second his generous endeavours, the auspicious circumstance must be ascribed to the disinterestedness of the Holy Servant of God. At the bidding of true friends, the sincerity of whose motives he doubted not, Vincent of Paul tore himself from the people by whom he was revered and loved, and among whom he would have been well pleased to spend the remainder of his days, in order to guide the education of a family whose future was of such great importance to the country. His salutary teachings penetrated deep into the mind of that youthful de Retz, who was afterwards Cardinal and Archbishop of Paris, and in due season, produced the most abundant fruit.

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exercise in the family of the most noble the Marquis of Gondi, did not hinder him from extending his care to the people of the neighborhood. Villepreu first shared his pastoral solicitude. Establishing there the "Confraternity of Charity," he was able to promote extensively, the material well-being of the people, whilst he ministered with untiring zeal to their spiritual comfort.

At Montmirel, where he likewise held a mission, several heretics yielded to his impressive words, and abjured their errors. One man could not acknowledge the Church, because, forsooth, poor country places were neglected, or cared for only by ignorant and vicious Clergy, whilst the services of the learned and the pious were confined to great cities. If such were generally the case, ground would, no doubt, exist for an adverse argument; but as the extraordinary care which the Church bestows in the education of all, without exception, who are destined to minister at her altars, renders it almost impossible that there should be ignorant or wicked Priests in the remoter parts of the country, any more than in populous cities, there is no cause whatever of accusation, far less, an argument that would tend to the overthrow of that great institution, "against which," it has been declared, "the gates of Hell shall not prevail." No reasoning the holy man could employ, made the least impression on this inveterate enemy of the Church. With a degree of pastoral solicitude beyond all praise, Vincent of Paul contrived to make it manifest to the unbeliever, that all members whatsoever, of the Catholic Church are most dear objects of her tender care. In order to effect this purpose, he established missions, wherever his influence could reach, and along with them, "the Confraternity of Charity." Several learned and devout Priests shared with him these pastoral labours. Numerous conversions were the fruit. And the heretic, observing that there was more religion among the country people than could have been supposed to exist in neglected districts, and witnessing at the same time, the zealous efforts of the Clergy, whose instructions he attended, was moved to repentance and a recantation of his errors, and acknowledged, at length that the Catholic Church is directed by the Spirit of God.

We now behold Vincent of Paul labouring in a cause to which he won the favor of the great. And, if the general of the French Gallies, if other high magistrates of France, together with the Sovereign, Louis XIII, surnamed the Just, must for ever live in the grateful remembrance of mankind, as the chief reformers of their age, they owe it above all, to the humble Priest, whose zeal claimed admission to the dark and noisome abodes of human misery. Unlike the children of the world, who are but too easily attracted by what is most calculated

to delight the mind or fascinate the senses, he listened only to the stern voice of duty, and devoted the time he could spare from his most useful missionary labours, and his important occupations in the house of Gondi, to the pious work of visiting hospitals and prisons. Those dungeons where the offenders against human justice were not only deprived of liberty, but unwarrantably tormented, were thrown open to his inspection, and "he saw," says his Biographer, "wretches shut up in obscure caverns, eaten by vermin, attenuated, and entirely neglected as concerned both soul and body." Such a state of things, so repugnant to the teachings of the Christian faith, could not fail to excite the keenest sympathies of the Saint. The Marquis of Gondi received his representations with favor; and was easily persuaded that charity made it a duty for him, as general of the Galleys, to see that the inmates of the Galley prisons were not cruelly treated or deprived of religious consolation. With his consent, Vincent hired and furnished a house in the Faubourg St. Honoré, where he gathered together all the convicts destined to the Galleys, who were scattered through the prisons of Paris. For sustaining this extensive establishment, he had no other resource than the offerings of the charitable. The Bishop of Paris, anxious to afford every facility for a work in which the cause of humanity was so deeply interested, instructed the Clergy, and especially such as were entrusted with the duty of preaching the word of God, to exhort the faithful to contribute the requisite assistance. The material wants of the unhappy convicts being thus provided for, they were in a condition to listen to the words of spiritual instruction. The sweet and persuasive language of St. Vincent soon overcame their dislike to religion. He brought them to understand that their sufferings, though involuntary, were, if borne with resignation, through the grace of our Divine Lord, highly meritorious; and that, in reality, there is no real pain but that by which impenitence will be punished for eternity. Such discourses could not fail to make impression. And, accordingly, a thorough reformation was generally effected in the moral and religious feelings of the convicts. M. de Gondi, beholding the order which now prevailed, was both surprised and edified. He spoke at Court of the good that had been done, not forgetting to praise the great zeal and capacity of Vincent of Paul. And Louis XIII., anxious that similar reforms should be introduced into all the prisons of the Kingdom, and believing that the charitable Priest only wanted opportunity in order to carry them out, appointed him Chaplain general of the Galleys of France.

Whilst Vincent of Paul was thus devoting his best energies to the salvation of other men, and to those in particular, who stood most in

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need of the consolations of his ministry, he neglected none of those things which, guided by the light of divinely revealed truth, he conceived to be necessary for his own sanctification. Self-denial is unquestionably of the strictest obligation for every Christian. But how shall it be practised even by the chosen servant of God in the midst of all the duties and cares, and toils of his public and very active life. The society of the great, the services he unceasingly rendered to the poor and lowly, his solicitude for all, his hourly and daily exertions in the cause of the suffering members of the flock, would have sufficed to distract any other man, and entirely divert his thoughts from the more immediate care of his own salvation. The strictest vigilance over the powers of his mind—extraordinary sobriety in eating and drinking, the shortest allowance of sleep and that on a pallet of straw, were but a slight portion of the austerities which he was wont to practice. We might suppose that a man whose consuming zeal made him submit to the fatigue of almost continual labour, might well have dispensed with more severe and painful mortifications—disciplines, even to blood—sharp pointed, galling chains,—the frightful, torturing hair shirt. The spiritual exercises also to which he had recourse, were frequent as they were searching. It was in the course of one of these when strictly reviewing his whole conduct, that he discovered a fault of his exterior life, which he hastened to correct. Habits of profound reflection, together with the natural gravity of his demeanor, gave him an austerity of manner which rendered intercourse with him less easy. This was more particularly remarked in his relations with the great. Whilst they hold urbanity of manner in such high estimation, by those in more humble spheres, it is made little account of. The Countess of Joigny even feared lest he should have felt dissatisfied in her house, and could not refrain from expressing to him her concern. It could not now, however, be any longer said that the great reformer of his age and country neglected to reform himself. He applied so assiduously to this work of self-improvement, that what he had once said of St. Francis of Sales, was strictly true as regarded himself—"that it was difficult to find a man, whose virtue displayed itself in more amiable traits of countenance, or better calculated to gain every heart to God."

We can now learn without surprise that the greatest Bishop of the time,—St. Francis of Sales,—marked his appreciation of Vincent of Paul, by naming him to the highly responsible office of Superior general of that pious congregation,—“the Religious of the Visitation,”—which owed its origin to Madam de Chantal, so justly celebrated for her sanctity and good works. In this honorable charge, the servant of God beheld only a new and most sacred stewardship, of which he

would have to render a strict account, and applied more than ever, to the practice of every sacerdotal virtue.

The Saint now conceived that he might avail himself of his high position as Chaplain general of the Galleys, in order to effect a thorough reformation amongst the convicts. For this purpose, he undertook a journey to Marseilles, in the hope of being able to do as much good there, as he had already done at Paris. But the task he took in hand was great—apparently too great even for the resources of his inexhaustible charity. How reform men who bewailed only the punishment of their crimes?—whose hearts overflowed with bitterness and hatred to society which chastised them—whose only language was blasphemy. Anxious to avoid the public honors that must have been paid to him as Chaplain general, he travelled *incognito*, to Marseilles, and when there, avoided making himself known, in order that he might ascertain more completely, the true state of things. Whilst Vincent of Paul was engaged in visiting the Galleys, and enquiring into the condition of each convict, a circumstance occurred which gave to the world an undeniable proof that, even in a degenerate age, the virtues of the early Christians were not impossible. He found a prisoner who, unlike the other Galley slaves, on whom the words of the Saint produced the most salutary impression, could not be changed, could not be comforted. Despair had seized upon him. The thought of his wife and family, from whom he was so cruelly separated, and who were, in consequence of his absence reduced to extreme misery, continually preyed upon his mind. No power of persuasion could move him—no means could be devised for the alleviation of his hard lot. But, true piety, ever so rich in expedients where there is question of doing good, found a remedy. Vincent of Paul, urged by a sublime impulse of charity, purchased the freedom of the convict with his own. He prevailed with the official in charge; and, loading himself with the heavy chain, taking in his hand the Galley oar—descending to the deep humiliation of penal servitude, and that for an indefinite length of time, he dismissed the victim of misery and despair, rejoicing, to his home. What a lesson to his age, and to all succeeding ages! Already were men beginning to say that Christianity had done its best—that its pristine power was spent,—that some new economy, some hitherto untried system, some undiscovered influence—must come to rescue the decaying world,—renew the social state,—inspire better and more deeply founded hope—shed light amid prevailing darkness, and prepare a bright future for the fallen and bewildered race of man. But how vain must not all such speculations appear, when we contemplate the heroic act of Vincent of Paul,—a deed of virtue to which history

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presents no parallel! The Christians of the primitive Church, with a spirit of self-sacrifice beyond all praise, not unfrequently reduced themselves to slavery in order to ransom their captive brethren*—their dear friends in Christ,—the beloved sisters, brothers, children,—who were wont to walk with them in the pleasant ways of holiness, and whose loved companionship was so cheering and so sweet. Let none question the excellence,—the sublimity of such self-devoting virtue. But it pales beside the heroism of St. Vincent. If anything could at all compare with the sacrifice and self-humiliation of Him, who, loading himself with our guilt,—“was bruised for our iniquities,”—and became a slave in order that we might be free, it is the devotedness of the man who by the practice of every virtue, having already striven to be “conformable to the image” of the Divine victim, is now, in the full sense of the word, conformed to this glorious resemblance, in assuming the appearance of a criminal and a slave, whilst he voluntarily subjects himself to the degrading punishment of crime.

It was not in the ardor and enthusiasm of youth, but in his fortieth year, that Vincent of Paul was impelled to this sublime “excess of benevolence and humiliation.” How great was he not in his abjection? Bruised and crushed with chains, arrayed in a felon’s garb, spent with incessant toil, this unoffending victim of human justice was also the willing victim of his own charity. Be praised for ever the great dispenser of eternal justice! If the angelic choirs above were now to join with our feeble voice, in one prolonged strain of celestial song, the gratitude of men and angels would not be sufficiently expressed for that goodness which provides an adequate reward—even an “eternal weight of glory,” for such great, such heroic acts of self-sacrifice.

The ardent, the devoted charity of St. Vincent, could only be equalled by his profound humility. If the love of his neighbour, in Christ, reduced him to the condition of a Galley slave, the dread of renown made him study ever to conceal his heroism. He who feared not to acknowledge in the midst of the proudest Court in Europe that he was the son of a poor labourer, studiously refrained from making mention of an action which alone would have earned for him enduring fame. He could not, however, deny it. And once when asked concerning a matter of such importance, he replied only by a smile, and humbly cast down his eyes, as, his countenance coloured with involuntary joy in thinking of the poor convicts for whom he had done so much. In the

* Multos inter vos cognovimus qui seipos in vincula conjecerunt, ut alios redimerent. St. Clement (Epist. ii.)

We have known many of ours who have devoted themselves to captivity, in order to ransom their brethren.—(Letter ii. to the Corinthians.)

fulness of his heart, he had once confided this secret in writing to a friend. Hearing, in his old age, that the letter had been preserved, he made the most extraordinary efforts in order to obtain possession of it. The confidential person who wrote for him happily rendered all his endeavours useless by adding: "Take the letter which he asks from you be honorable to him, take care you do not send it back. He would certainly burn it."

A considerable time elapsed before it was known what had become of Vincent of Paul. Through the search caused to be made by the Countess of Joigni, he was at length discovered. Meanwhile, his zeal for both the spiritual and temporal well-being of the convicts suffered no abatement. What he had already effected for their improvement at Paris, he now began to accomplish at Marseilles. Through the influence or rather the direct power which his high position conferred, and with the aid of the humane general, M. de Gondi, he was able to ameliorate the material condition of the Galley slaves. Their punishment indeed could not be done away with. Justice and the laws must be satisfied. But cruelty, the Saint considered, was as contrary to the fundamental principles of law, as it was unnecessary. The sternest justice could not require that its victims should be compelled to breathe the pestiferous air of crowded and unwholesome prisons, and when sick, to remain neglected in the dark and filthy dungeons to which a heartless legislation doomed them. He not only comforted them himself, ministering with his own hands to their wants, but caused it to become the rule at Marseilles, as through his means it already was at Paris, that they should be kindly tended in their sickness. In order that this work which humanity so loudly called for, should be more easily accomplished, the Saint founded for the use of sick convicts, an hospital of 300 beds at Marseilles. He succeeded also in replacing the house which he had rented at Paris, for the same purpose, by a magnificent hospital at the gate St. Bernard. The convicts thus charitably cared for, were more open to religious impressions. The instructions and exhortations of the ordinary Chaplains were willingly listened to. Care and cleanliness, together with tender nursing in time of sickness, aided the cause of godliness, and a thorough reformation was effected.

In this age of improvement, we can hardly conceive that such changes should have been necessary. But, it behoves us to remember that it is scarcely yet thirty years since we commenced to reform our prison discipline, and that what we are now doing in obedience to the dictates of humanity, and by the favor of a better state of society, late in the nineteenth century, a Christian Saint wisely and humanely carried out for the benefit of his age and country, early in the seventeenth.

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But, whilst Vincent of Paul was engaged in this salutary work of reform, which, one would say, belonged more properly to statesmen and legislators, he neglected not those still greater things which appertained directly to his sacred calling. There never was a Priest who possessed a more thorough appreciation of the duties of his state. This was manifest no less from the zeal with which he applied to his parochial duties, than by the care with which he laboured, during the days of his connection with the house of Gondi, for the salvation of all who were dependant upon, or any way in relation with that powerful family. His missions were so frequent, that we cannot resist the conviction that he was specially sent both to reclaim the erring and to convert the unbelieving. Deeply convinced that the mission of the Church extends to all time,—“all days,”—and understanding that by his vocation, he largely shared in this mission, he adopted the wisest measures for providing not only that the men of his own day should profit by the life-giving offices of the Pastoral ministry, but also, that succeeding generations should enjoy in abundance the fruits which never cease to flow from a faithful exercise of those Apostolic and sublime functions. With what lively faith did not Vincent of Paul believe that the varied gifts of the Christian ministry were conferred in order that all men—the men of all tribes and tongues—“might meet in unity of faith and knowledge of the Son of God.” This was “the building up” of the great edifice of the Christian Church,—“the body of Christ.” This was the stupendous work of the dispensation of grace and love, for the accomplishment of which so many gifts were given to men, that, “some were made apostles and some prophets, and other some evangelists, and other some pastors and doctors.” (Eph. iv.) All these gifts without exception, had been richly bestowed on Vincent of Paul. And not in vain. Eminently an Evangelist, he preaches the gospel to the poor, as well as to the rich and great—a Prophet and a Doctor—he unravels the mysteries of faith, he enlightens the ignorant, confirms those who doubt, confounds the unbelieving,—a Pastor whom zeal consumes, he is solicitous alike for every member of the flock,—an Apostle, his mission is not circumscribed by the limits of a parish, a province or a country—he carries it to distant lands the light of Divine Revelation. It is no exaggeration to say that he preaches to “every creature,” that he “teaches all nations.” None will question this fact, so glorious to our Saint, who consider the society of pious and learned Priests which he established in the capital of France and which in so short a time, extended its labours to the remotest climes. But, not only are the Priests of his own society, his fellow labourers in the great work of sustaining and propagating truth. He conceives

the design of carrying out the view adopted by the Church in the Holy Council of Trent. The Archbishop of Paris lends his powerful aid. Diocesan Seminaries are established, and, by their means, the forty-five thousand best citizens of France,—so the Clergy were styled even in an unbelieving age,—learn at the School of St. Vincent of Paul, and like him become patterns of zeal, of knowledge, of apostolic eloquence, of self-sacrificing charity, of every christian, every sacerdotal virtue. Among these were not a few whose names have come down, with undying honor, to our time,—the Ollier, the d'Almeras, the Trougon, the Bernard, the Eudes Mezerni, the Bourdoise, founders of institutions useful alike to religion and civil society, which, necessarily dependent the one upon the other, are destined to proceed hand in hand, in the noble work of progress and improvement. But, we need not dilate on foundations which are so well known, which still enlighten our age, as they astonished and improved the age which gave them birth. How great must not have been the success of Vincent of Paul's undertaking, when such men were his pupils, as Bossuet of Meaux, Abelli of Rodez, Perochel of Boulogne, Godeau de Vence, Pavillon d'Aleth, Vialard de Chalons? One of these, the celebrated Bishop of Meaux, the most accomplished writer of his time and the Prince of ecclesiastical orators, bore witness, when 72 years of age, "that, when he listened in his youth, to the instructions of Vincent of Paul, he imagined that God himself was speaking to him." The eloquent Fléchier, the Divine Fénelon, with many other Bishops and Theologians of great eminence, speak in equally high terms, of the impressive and powerful preaching of St. Vincent. One would say that this wonderful servant of God possessed the faculty of imparting to other men by a force of persuasion that can be likened only to that of St. Paul, the sentiments, which filled his own breast,—his unquenchable thirst for righteousness, his ardent, but wisely regulated zeal, his sublime charity.

The important society of Missionary Priests, which, under the title of "the Congregation of the Mission," was destined to extend and perpetuate the apostolic labours of Vincent of Paul, at first found an asylum in the *College des bons enfants*. The holy servant of God retiring from the house of Gondi, now took up his abode there, (1625,) and in a short time gathered around him several of the most learned ecclesiastics of the time. They were chiefly doctors of Sorbonne, known by their learning and writings, as well as by their piety. Louis XIII. who could so well appreciate true merit, gave strength and courage to the new association, by imparting to it the Royal sanction. The public voice, which, except in the most depraved communities, is never raised but in the cause of right, sustained it against a miserable

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cabal. The most able magistrates lent their countenance. The Parliament of Paris honored it with the seal of its authority. The Pope, Urban the VIII., delighted to find that a company of disinterested Pastors had devoted themselves to the care of the most neglected portion of the flock of Christ, crowned it with favours, imparting the Apostolic benediction, and constituting the least pretending of all societies a Religious Congregation. The labours of the good Priests now permanently associated under the auspices of St. Vincent, were so productive of salutary fruits, that the most learned ecclesiastics could truly say: "that, they did not believe there was anything in the Church of God more edifying than the sweet odour which the holy company spread everywhere; and, that they must pray to God to give additional solidity to a design so advantageous for the good of souls."

Not only did St. Vincent's congregation promote the spiritual welfare of the less instructed portion of the Faithful, it became a light also for the guidance of the Pastors of the flock. Conferences were established at the *College des bons enfants*, and the most learned of the Clergy became more learned still, by the frequent discussion of the more important, and especially the more practical questions of Theology. The first Archbishop of Paris, Jean Francois de Gondi, the son of that Emmanuel de Gondi whose name will long survive as the friend of Vincent of Paul, and his fellow-laborer in the cause of reform, anxious that the candidates for holy orders, should possess the science as well as the virtues proper to their state, required that they should spend some time in serious preparation under the direction of St. Vincent and the Priests of his Congregation. Many other Bishops, likewise, availed themselves of the new institution. This institution, essentially spiritual, gained, without courting it, the favour of the great. That Queen Regent of France, Anne of the house of Hapsburgh, more truly royal by the dignity of her character than by her imperial birth and exalted station, marked her appreciation by signifying her intention to make a royal foundation in favour of a society that had become so useful. And, indeed, it needed aid. There were now six ordinations yearly, and, consequently, no fewer than eighty ecclesiastics must be maintained for two months within the walls of the College. The untoward circumstances of the time rendered it impossible to carry out the pious purpose of the good Queen. But, the great soul of Vincent sufficed for every want. Far from narrowing the sphere of his labours, far from having what the world would praise as a wise regard to the temporal interests of his congregation, he opened the doors of the College des bons enfants to an additional number of youthful ecclesiastics,—the candidates for minor orders, who, in obedience to the wishes of the

Archbishop, who had been himself a pupil of St. Vincent, now made their immediate preparation for the holy state, under the guidance of the Priests of the Mission. Such was the reformation of ecclesiastical discipline in the Diocese of Paris, that several pious families of the capital were anxious that all ecclesiastics, without distinction of country, should participate in exercises that had already proved so beneficial to the Church. One lady, alone, undertook to defray for five years, all the additional expense occasioned by this extension of the labours of the Congregation.

In 1642, St. Vincent enjoyed the happiness of beholding his Society established by Urban VIII. at Rome. It was blessed there, as it had been in so many other places, with extraordinary success. It was highly favored by the successors of Pope Urban. Alexander VII. appointed that all candidates whosoever for holy orders, should attend its exercises. And Innocent XI., so renowned for his many virtues, willed that the Clergy already ordained, even they who had long exercised the Pastoral office, should renew themselves in the spirit of their vocation, by sharing from time to time, in the pious practices of the disciples of St. Vincent. None could disdain to receive instruction at such a source. For, not only Vincent of Paul and the eminent men whom he chose for his associates, but the great lights of the age also, Bossuet and Fénelon, were, not unfrequently, the teachers.

The regenerative labours of St. Vincent were now very considerably facilitated by a rich donation. Deeds which affected so beneficially his own country and even foreign nations, could not be concealed. To their fame he owed the great establishment of St. Lazarus. The Saints are, indeed, wonderful in their ways, and God is wonderful in his Saints. We cannot otherwise account for Vincent's hesitation to accept for his congregation, a gift that could only tend to promote their usefulness. But, he dreaded riches more than poverty. The latter had hitherto been the treasure of his missions. The former might prove to be their ruin. Fifteen months elapse before he can determine. He will only be guided by the will of Divine Providence (*le vouloir de la Providence*.) St. Lazarus was a great house. It had been in former ages, a royal palace in which the Kings of France held their Court. It still retained extensive possessions, and important feudal rights. Its owner was a mighty Lord, possessing judicial powers of the highest order. Whoever, then, has any knowledge of the character of Vincent of Paul will not be surprised to learn that he only accepted so munificent a gift at last, on account of the greater amount of good which it enabled him to accomplish. St. Lazarus became the home of his congregation,—the centre from which radiated in all directions, that light

with which he was gifted, and which, far from being "concealed under a bushel," was destined to enlighten many nations and generations yet unborn.

This improvement in the temporal condition of the important missionary institution which Vincent of Paul had so successfully founded, by no means retards or diminishes its spiritual growth. The holy servant of God binds to the work of evangelizing the poor in his own country, a society whose objects are so truly apostolical, whilst, at the same time, he requires that it shall be devoted in part, to the cause of missions in foreign countries. Thus will the society live long in the grateful remembrance of his country. It comes to the aid, in due time, of those classes of the community, which all other institutions appear to shun. With them, more than with any besides, religion is the chief moral safeguard. And the Brethren of St. Vincent, bring it, together with its salutary counsels, its spirit of peace and love, to every man's door. Vincent of Paul was, in all reality, the people's friend. The people were as the children of his family, dear to him as the apple of his eye. It was only fitting, then, that his fellow labourers should be the Priests of the people. It was in accordance besides, with the mind of the Church, which wills that her ministers should be debtors alike to all. They devote themselves, accordingly, to the care of the people, chiefly in the country Parishes, whilst, at the same time, by their instructions and the salutary discipline which, under the rule of their sainted founder, they maintain within the walls of St. Lazarus, they form the minds of all the Clergy of the Kingdom.

But the great also, are called to the knowledge of divine things. (*Reges intelligite, erudimini qui judicatis terram.*) The blessing of apostolic teaching must be possessed within the regal mansion of Versailles. A monarch who was remarkable for his discernment of character, and his generous appreciation of good men, willed that this bread of Heaven should be dispensed amidst his Court, by the pious associates of St. Vincent. That they were true to their duty, the history of several generations bears witness. During a century and a half, their preaching was with much power and fruit, whilst their sanctity ceased not to shine forth as an ever bright and guiding light, proof against the seductions of a Court, where virtue and profligacy held sway by turns.

But it is in the labours of foreign missions, especially, that we recognize the rare merit of the children of St. Vincent. Not in name, only, are they *missionaries*. They, indeed, possess a *mission*,—a mission, one would say, to the whole world. For, what region is there that has not been illustrated by their toil? In the most remote and bar-

barous climes, they have borne aloft the torch of truth. Under all circumstances, in every conceivable state of society, they have labored in the cause of their Divine Lord, braving danger, suffering privation, in obscurity, far from the cheering companionship of their brethren, proscribed, imprisoned, banished, in famine, in pestilence, in martyrdom.

But let us pause for a moment, in the history of these apostolic men, and accompany their holy founder to the bedside of his expiring Sovereign. Louis XIII. of France was scrupulously virtuous. His strict obedience to the dictates of conscience was manifest in his public life. His people to whom he was spared so short a time, shewed, in what high esteem they held his blameless character, by giving him the surname of "the Just." Would that all monarchs—that all who rule and judge the earth, were deserving to be thus honored,—thus enshrined in the people's heart of hearts! But neither his excellent virtues nor the nation's tears could wholly dispel the fears and sorrows that surround the couch of death. Nor were the words that console the soul when no earthly stay remains, to be found on the lips of the fashionable preachers of the time. One of these courtly clergymen observing the excellent dispositions of the royal patient, conceived that it was his duty to congratulate the pious monarch on "the admirable understanding which prevailed between their Divine and earthly majesties." Such compliments were ill-timed. The King, together with the glory of royalty had already passed away. There remained only the man with his natural weakness,—the Christian who believed, who hoped, who loved, but who was not without fear and misgiving, when on the eve of passing from time into eternity—the Christian, who, in his last and supreme trial, stood in need of the sweet and soul sustaining consolations of religion. The dispenser of empty compliments was obliged to discontinue his attendance, and Vincent of Paul was invited to bestow his pastoral care at the sick-bed of the suffering Monarch.

King Louis now so near his end, has no cause to regret his choice of that holy servant of God, who had so often acted the part not only of a good pastor, but of an angel of mercy towards the least of his people. During the whole month that he still lingers, Vincent of Paul ceases not to inspire him with confidence in the Divine goodness, to cheer his drooping spirit with the prospect of a glorious future, to dispel the terrors of the grave by encouraging the agonized but patient sufferer to repose in Him, who took from death its sting, and from the grave its victory.

Vincent failed not to avail himself of so favorable an occasion for instilling into the mind of the infant son of the departing Sovereign,

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the first elements of that Divine law, which is also the best code of human morals. Who can hear without emotion, how the saintly Pastor taking into his paternal arms, the heir to the Crown of France, as yet a delicate child, and weeping with him over the death-bed of the expiring King, taught, amidst a scene of domestic sorrow, where God alone was great, those principles of the Gospel, which, in after years, exalted as he was above ordinary men, even above the rulers of mankind, and distracted by the cares and errors of his prolonged reign, Louis XIV. never ceased to hold in reverence.

The mind of Louis XIII. was now calm and collected. His tears were those of compunction, his words the expression of resignation and confiding love. Before yielding up his life in the arms of the Saint, he must confide to him a trust, which showed how wise and merciful was the design of Providence in directing the steps of St. Vincent to the presence of so good a King. His last counsel to the disconsolate Queen, was, that during the time of her Regency, Vincent of Paul should be charged with the nomination of the chief Pastors of the Kingdom. Anne of Austria held the wish of her departed Consort as a most sacred order, and Vincent of Paul became the head of her Council for all affairs of religion. It cannot but appear extraordinary that so judicious an appointment should have caused astonishment at the Court of France. Courts are proverbially worldly. And what is wisely and kindly done can only be honored by their censure. What more reasonable than that the most faithful minister of religion should be the counsellor of the government in everything wherein religion is concerned? The event abundantly justified the choice of the Queen Regent. Vincent of Paul's first act, on entering on his important ministry was to bind himself, publicly, by oath, never to accept any ecclesiastical preferment, either for himself or his Congregation. He was true to his word. During ten years of assiduous attendance in the Council of State, he lived in honorable poverty, distinguished only by his singleness of mind and simplicity of manner. If in the celebrated epoch of Louis XIV.,—the Augustan age of France,—the Church was, humanly speaking, equal to the time, it was due to the wisdom and firmness of St. Vincent, who never promoted to ecclesiastical dignities, any who were not qualified by the requisite preparatory studies. Thus, in a time of great literary fame, do we find the names of highest renown, in the ranks of the army of the Church. But, the ministry of the Saint was marked by still greater—still more beneficial results. In an age, dangerous to the cause of truth and morality, from its excess of refinement, the principles of religion were not only preserved, but widely disseminated. If at a later epoch, amidst the wreck of

civil society, and even of the Church itself, the Pastors of the fold were found faithful, if still later, a complete restoration was possible,—was triumphantly carried out, such inappreciable blessings must be ascribed to the extraordinary wisdom of Vincent of Paul, in the administration of ecclesiastical affairs, during that long and critical minority, which was followed by a reign, no less glorious than it was disastrous. “God is indeed wonderful in his saints.” But who, in the time of St. Vincent, could ever have anticipated that the conduct of one man would have influenced, so powerfully, generations to come, and that to him more than to any individual besides, religion would owe its existence, its revival, the greatest victory it has won in any nation, since it was first given to the fallen world?

Notwithstanding his onerous and varied occupations, Vincent of Paul could find time for a difficult and dangerous journey. In the time of the too celebrated Fronde wars, there existed no Peace Congress that could offer its philanthropic mediation. But there was in the Council of the Sovereign of France, a devoted Christian who, not satisfied with bewailing the civil strife which raged around the capital, resolved to exert all his influence in order to bring it to an end. For this purpose a difficult and dangerous journey was necessary. The saintly Priest hesitated not to undertake it. And we now behold him at St. Germain en Laye, at one time remonstrating with the Queen Regent, at another, gently but firmly chiding the great minister, the all-powerful Mazarin. “Were a whole people to be sacrificed in order to punish a few mal-contented? Were millions to perish by famine and the sword, because some thirty individuals envied the high position of the Cardinal minister? Mazarin ought rather to retire from office, than be the occasion of such national calamities.” The minister was moved, and even consented to resign on condition that the Council of State approved the resolution. But the counsellors who surrounded the Queen Regent, could not bring themselves to share the opinion of the Premier and the Minister of ecclesiastical affairs, and for once, the friend of humanity failed in his endeavours to alleviate the miseries of fellow-countrymen.

Meanwhile, the news that he was disgraced, had reached the capital. His safe return no sooner dispelled the rumor, than his numerous friends hastened to present their congratulations. They knew and honored his many virtues. They now learned how truly, how profoundly humble he was, when he said in reply to their joyful greetings: “Would to God the news were true! But, such a miserable individual is not deserving of so great a favor.”

Wonderful, indeed, was the life of Vincent of Paul. In all his ways,

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the hard of the most High may be visibly traced. In his early education, his exile, his captivity, his journey to Rome, his mission to the Court of Henry the Great; in his pastoral labours, his martyrdom in the Gallies, his successful efforts in the cause of reform,—reform in the prisons, reform in the state, reform in the educational establishments of his country,—in the admirable institutions, especially ecclesiastical seminaries, by means of which, the Church itself was reformed, and perfectly adapted to the wants of the time; in his presence at a great centre of earthly power, and his high position, at a most critical epoch, as Minister of State;—in every circumstance of his eventful life, we behold the ever wise and ever beneficial agency of an all ruling Providence. Truly, may it be said of this Saint of modern times, as of Israel's ancient King, that the Lord "took him from the pastures, from following the sheep, to be a Ruler over his people, and made him a great name, like unto the name of the great ones that are on the earth." (2 Kings, vii. 8, 9.

II.

It was time, now, according to the world's views, that the holy servant of God should rest from his labours. More was already accomplished, than would have sufficed to secure an imperishable claim to the gratitude of his country and of mankind. His fame was at its height. A position of highest honor, and unbounded influence had been conferred upon him. He occupied a chief place in the Council of his Sovereign, and a mighty kingdom was swayed by his authority and saved by his wisdom. The most aspiring ambition could not have desired any greater triumph. But, his was not worldly ambition, and he could not rest satisfied with ambition's greatest victory. He was "zealous for the better gifts,"—"the more excellent way,"—a way, which, to the children of the world, is an untrodden path,—dark and mysterious,—a secret undisclosed, even, as, before the Christian "age," it was concealed from the ages and generations that preceded. Into this way, which the Doctor of the nations speaking by inspiration so distinctly pointed out. (1 Cor. xii. 31.) Vincent of Paul was led by the Spirit of God. It was not the ardour of youth that urged him on in his ever memorable career of self-sacrificing charity. For, as his years increased, so did his labours of Christian love. Never had cupidity itself a votary that pursued the objects of his desire, with more passionate eagerness, than Vincent of Paul devoted himself to the works of his choice. A more *philanthropic* age may boast of its superior benevolence. But, it has, yet, a giant's race to run, before it can rival the philanthropy, not of a former age, indeed, but of one man,—

that man a Saint, who had no other pretension than to be inspired and guided by a religion which speaks with the same voice to all. Nothing is here advanced, that is not fully borne out by facts. We need only appeal to the works of St. Vincent,—works of mercy, so numerous and so great, that no kind of suffering can well be conceived, which they did not relieve or alleviate. Truly, the spirit of the Lord was upon him, and “God anointed him in his Priesthood, not only, in order “that he might preach to the meek and lowly, and heal the contrite of heart,” but also “that he might *comfort all that are afflicted*, give to the mourners of Sion, a crown for ashes, and the oil of joy for mourning.” (Isaiah lxi.) As has been already shewn, he lived austere. He allowed himself no indulgence. And yet, at the sight, or at the tale of misery, his keenest sympathies were awakened. His compassion was too real to find expression in tears and lamentations, which are so often insincere. Yet was he not able so completely to control the feelings which the presence of affliction excited in his breast, that the traces which sorrow made were not visible in his countenance. Nor was it in his youth only, that he was thus tenderly compassionate. His ardent wish to dry up the tears of all who were in sorrow, only gathered new strength, as he advanced in years. Wisely and gratefully did his age confer on him the glorious title of *Father of the afflicted*. And it is no exaggeration to say, that, if leaving out of view the acts of the first forty years of his life, we considered only the later portion of his career,—the thirty years of his maturer age, which he spent in doing good, in alleviating the woes of mankind, we should not fail to acknowledge that he was not surpassed by any of the most faithful servants of God, in the more happy days of the Church, when so many by the works of charity to which they devoted themselves, did honor to the Christian name.

St. Vincent was in his seventy-eighth year, when he conceived the idea of founding an hospital in the City of Paris, for the relief of a considerable number of aged persons. About the same time, a worthy citizen left in his hands, a large sum of money for any good work to which he chose to assign it. The Saint suggested that by means of this fund an asylum should be provided, for forty poor mechanics of the capital, who, in their old age had come to ruin and poverty. The spiritual wants of these unfortunate people were also to be ministered to. The kind benefactor was highly pleased with this proposal. And, accordingly, two houses and some ground in the suburbs of Paris were purchased. A Chapel was erected, and a Priest of the Mission appointed to preach the Word of God and administer the sacraments to the inmates. Sisters of Charity, likewise, had charge to wait on them,

and Vincent himself was one of the first who went to instruct them, and preach to them peace, union and resignation. In this institution, which was called "the house of the Name of Jesus," the most admirable discipline prevailed. Many ladies of the "confraternity of charity" went to visit this house, anxious to see everything, examine everything, hear an account of everything. The result of their enquiries was in the highest degree satisfactory. There was no murmuring, no evil-speaking, but on the contrary, union and contentment, whilst all applied diligently to their employments, attended, willingly and devoutly, their religious exercises, and declared by their tears, sometimes, as well as by their words, that they had never been so happy. A great problem was now solved. It was no longer a question whether, the most miserable people, accustomed to an idle, a wandering, and not unfrequently, a dissolute life, could be induced to live, in peace and harmony, under the same roof. The idea is conceived of gathering into one vast hospital, all the misery of the great French metropolis. Hitherto the wisest statesmen, the most ingenious legislators, the most powerful and the most beneficent monarchs had failed in their endeavours to remove the intolerable evil of vagrancy from the streets of the capital. What Henry the Great, what Mary of Medici tried in vain, and would have considered the most glorious monument to their memory; what St. John Chrysostom laboured, fruitlessly, to effect, in his city of Constantinople, the humble Vincent, in his declining years, at length accomplished. The undertaking was at first warmly recommended by the Ladies of the charitable confraternity. At the very outset, one of them promised fifty thousand livres, and another, an income of three thousand. Still, to the Saint, accustomed as he was to great works, it appeared a formidable task. A week later, another meeting was held, and the benevolent project once more examined. The deliberation was short. Not one voice was raised in opposition. Even delay was deprecated. And the Saint, borne on the tide of opinion, consented, though not without misgiving, to commence the most difficult of all his stupendous works. An immense place was necessary for so great a number of poor. Vincent, accordingly, asked and obtained of the King the rich and large house of La Salpêtrière. The magistracy looked with favor on the design: the Royal letters patent were readily granted. But, there now arose a difficulty which caused the registration of these documents to be delayed. Several learned and influential judges, considering the great number of vagabonds who wandered through the streets, and convinced that such audacious characters could not be brought to live under the same roof, looked upon the project, however nobly conceived, as

utterly chimerical. But, the consummate prudence of St. Vincent, the zeal of the Ladies who had so generously aided him, the great influence of the first President, Pomponne de Bellievre, at length overcame this unexpected obstacle, and after numerous conferences, the matter was finally arranged. The Salpêtrière was now known as the General Hospital; and, it was resolved, contrary to the opinion which the holy servant of God had first entertained, that all the beggars of Paris should be compelled either to avail themselves of the institution, or to support themselves by honest industry. Of the forty-thousand dwellers in the streets, no fewer than six thousand entered the hospital, and enjoyed a new and a happier life, under the auspices of the holy Priest, whilst the rest, partly found employment in the city, but, for the most part, withdrew to the Provinces. Louis XIV. was the greatest benefactor of this magnificent establishment. Cardinal Mazarin, at once, contributed one hundred thousand livres, and sixty thousand more at his death. M. Pomponne gave twenty thousand crowns, and bequeathed to the institution a still greater sum by his will.

If anything could surpass the merit of Vincent of Paul in founding an establishment already so great at its commencement, and destined so long to survive him, it was the modesty beyond praise, with which he spoke of it, even to his confidential friends. It was necessary, indeed, that he should interest them in its favor. But, he avoided mentioning what most redounded to his honor. He did not say, what, however, was the case, that the first idea of so glorious an enterprise originated with himself; that it was he, who surmounted the chief difficulties, who caused the necessary articles of furniture to be made by the workmen of his house, and who found so many resources in the Ladies of his confraternity, in consequence of having taught them for nearly twenty years, to attempt, and that successfully, what appeared to be impossible.

It was not, indeed, wonderful that, in an age of great minds, so many should be found willing to contribute towards the success of so valuable an institution. But, if the formidable difficulty which staggered the Judges of Paris, was speedily overcome, this happy result was due to the Apostolic zeal of St. Vincent, who, whilst, with the most laudable disinterestedness, he refused for his "congregation," the spiritual charge of the establishment, procured the services of learned and pious ecclesiastics. Thus were the heavenly influences of religion made to guide the destinies of the vast mansion of the poor. And, hence, more favored than our modern work-houses, which are dreaded and shunned as if they were the most dismal prisons, it rejoiced in the multitude of its contented and happy inmates.

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In such ways did the holy man do good to that capital of which he was so distinguished a citizen. But distant provinces must also participate in the fruits of his disinterested charity. In the days of St. Vincent, Lorraine became a prey to all the evils of a most cruel war. The French, the Spaniards, the Swedes and the people of Lorraine themselves laid waste the country by turns, and sometimes all of them at the same time. Religious differences increased the horrors of intestine strife, and the soldiers of the various powers and factions, infuriated by party spirit, are represented by historians, as falling like wolves upon the devoted inhabitants. There was no security for life or property. Monasteries, even, afforded no asylum to female virtue. The highways were deserted, the labours of the field abandoned. All confidence was at an end. Neighbour could not sleep beside neighbour from the dread of assassination. Famine and pestilence came in the train of war. Acorns and wild fruits were the only food of the people in such towns and villages as were not reduced to ashes. The most infectious carrion was devoured with avidity. A man was convicted, and put to death for having slain his own sister for a loaf of bread. Mothers, even, were known to sustain a miserable existence by feeding on the flesh of their own children. Great were the sufferings of Jerusalem during its memorable siege. But they fell short of those of ill-starred Lorraine. No children of Israel are said to have satisfied their hunger by preying on the authors of their life. Such horrors were reserved for an unhappy Christian people. Well might Father Caussin say: "*Sola Lotharingia Jerosolymam calamitate vincit.*" In this extremity of evil, a deputation reaches the capital of France. To whom does it apply? Not to the Sovereign;—not to the high functionaries of the State; not to the representatives of the people; not to the people themselves, but to an humble Priest,—to the charitable man, who, is already so celebrated for his paternal care of all who suffer amongst the people of God, that they address him as "the Steward of Divine Providence." Nor is he deaf to their petition. We might well suppose, that having already done so much, his resources were exhausted. But it was not so. His cheering words at first revived the hopes of the despairing deputies of Lorraine. And he speedily found means of relieving to a great extent their sore distress. He was able in a short time, to succour the hospitals, the monasteries, the nobility, the labouring classes, the soldiers. His charity like a fertilizing river, distributed abundance all around. By his moving discourses, he excited compassion among the people of Paris, where there was little sympathy with the sorrows of Lorraine. He interested in the cause, persons of the highest rank,—the Ladies of his "confraternity," the

Duchess of Aiguillon, and, even, the Queen Regent herself, who had but little reason to be satisfied with the disturbed Province. At the same time, he set an example of liberality that can never be sufficiently appreciated. And in order that his alms might be the more abundant, he engaged the Brethren of his community to subsist, as well as himself, on the coarsest kinds of bread. Would that men would take to heart so great a lesson. That the votaries of avarice and ambition, who so recklessly stir up the demon of war, would learn from the self-sacrificing generosity of a Vincent of Paul, to make an offering of their quarrels at the shrine of Charity!

The benevolent labours of the holy Priest were attended with the most happy results. No fewer than twenty-five cities, together with an immense number of equally famine-struck towns and villages, were at once relieved, and to such an extent, that it might be truly said that by the assistance so opportunely sent, the lives of the inhabitants were saved. The sick, who were found lying in the public places, were provided with all the aid their condition called for, and the most tender compassion could suggest. Many of all orders of society and of every age and sex, together with religious women, who, in their desolation, had appealed, and, hitherto, in vain, to all Europe, were clothed, as well as supplied with food. During ten years that the famine lasted, Vincent continued to send every month 30,000 livres, together with medicines, waggon loads of bread, seed grain, farming implements, and clothing for twenty thousand men of every condition.

The Duke of Lorraine, being more intent on battles and sieges, than anxious to promote the happiness of his people, there was no prospect of the war coming to an end. Many families of distinction, therefore, abandoned a country, where they could no longer exist, and sought refuge in Paris. They were not long there, when, whatever means they possessed utterly failed them. This privation they felt the more severely, as they could not bring themselves to make it known. It did, however, reach the ears of St. Vincent. And, if anything were wanting to shew how boundless was his charity, it would be found in the reply he gave to the person, who made known to him their distress. For years, his house and his friends had been heavily taxed for the calamities of Lorraine, and yet, he could receive this new application, not only without a murmur, but even with gratitude and joy. "What pleasure do you not afford me! Yes, it is just to relieve these poor noblemen, in order to honor our Lord, who was most noble and most poor at the same time."

The relief of these noble families became the occasion of forming an association, which may be classed among the greatest works of St.

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Vincent. He persuaded seven or eight persons of the highest rank, at the head of whom was the Baron de Renty, to unite, in order to render to persons of their condition, when reduced to indigence, such services as they themselves would stand in need of, if visited with the like adverse fortune. This illustrious assembly remained in existence for twenty years, the members, impelled, like St. Vincent, by the divine impulse of self-sacrificing charity, never failing to impose on themselves new burthens, whenever new wants required a new measure of relief.

Fortunate it was that there existed such a Society. But for it, and for its holy founder, what would have become of those children of our own country whom the worst of all tyrannies—that which was fraudulently established in the name of liberty, banished far from their hearths and altars? France, indeed, might have offered a generous hospitality to the descendants of those heroes who fought for British glory at Oreey and at Azincourt; she might have remembered only that they were the sons of those brave Crusaders who together with her own warriors of imperishable fame, “against the usurping infidel displayed the blessed Cross and won the holy land.” We question not that her spirit of chivalry would have revived. But, we know, and to the glory of our Saint let it be told, it was Vincent of Paul who, together with his association of pious noblemen, ministered to the pressing wants of the numerous British families, whom the cruelty of the “Lord Protector’s” government had driven from their country and their homes. The same kindness was shown to them as had been already extended to the exiled nobility of Lorraine. Some difficulty arose from the death of Baron de Renty in the flower of his age. But, the friendly aid was continued by Vincent of Paul himself during the remainder of his days.

In another and still more extraordinary way, shall we now behold the servant of God coming to the relief of human misery. Returning, one day, from a mission, he noticed in a retired spot near the walls of Paris, one of those wicked vagrants, who have recourse to the most unscrupulous devices, in order to excite compassion, engaged in mutilating the tender limbs of an unfortunate foundling. Utterly horror-struck, and impelled by generous indignation, he rushed towards the heartless vagabond, exclaiming as he tore the child from his grasp: “Barbarian! At a distance, I took you for a man. I was grievously mistaken.” And he bore away the infant in his arms, appealing as he traversed the streets of Paris, to the compassionate feelings of the people. The crowd followed him, but, without being able to divine his purpose, until he reached the house in St. Landry Street, where

these wretched infants were domiciled in crowds. There he related to the sympathising citizens the cruel scene which he had witnessed. And, bringing religion to the aid of their benevolent impulses, he exhorted them to unite in making adequate provision for these helpless creatures. He himself took charge of twelve, blessed them, and laid upon himself the obligation of providing for them. The Ladies of his charitable association also lent their aid, and the orphans were cared for. The importance of this work will be better understood when we consider that there was no better refuge for these forsaken children, than the house of a heathenish widow in St. Landri Street, who with the aid of two servants, had charge to bring them up. Means were so scanty, that many of the poor infants died from want of sufficient food, whilst others were poisoned by the servants. Such as escaped these dangers, were given to any who would take them, or were sold at so low a price, not unfrequently, as twenty sous. Many were barbarously killed for magical operations, and whole hecatombs of these innocent victims were slain in order to procure for certain invalids who were tormented with the inordinate and futile desire to preserve a despicable existence, the luxury of a bath of human blood. Surely, humanity had a right to demand, and it had long demanded in vain, that so crying an evil should be remedied. It was, however, far beyond the power of human art—the skill of statesmen, the wisdom of legislators, the power of kings. Religion, at length, in an age of men who were capable of appreciating its sublime teachings, found out a remedy. The resources of St. Vincent and the worthy families by whom he was habitually aided, could only suffice for the support of a small number. The Saint anxious to extend so benevolent a work, appealed in the most moving terms, to the Queen Regent. And, Anne of Austria, who like a renowned Emperor of old looked upon every day as lost, on which she did not do some good, obtained from the king an income of £600,—the rents of five large farms. The number of children increased so much, that in a short time, £2,000 annually did not suffice for their maintenance. The charitable ladies were beyond measure discouraged, and unanimously declared that they could no longer bear expenditure which so far exceeded their means. A consultation was held. Among those who assembled on this occasion (1648) were the Marillacs, the Traversais, the Miramions and others venerable by their good works and irreproachable life. The question was, whether the pious undertaking which had been so well begun, should be continued. Vincent laid down the reasons that might be adduced on both sides. The association had not, indeed, contracted any obligation, and were free to decide as they pleased. But by their charitable provisions, they

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had hitherto, preserved the lives of a great number of children ; through their means, those innocent beings, in learning to speak, had learned to know and serve God ; ~~and~~ some of them were beginning to work, and to relieve others from the expense of their support, and ~~in~~ this auspicious commencement was a presage of still greater advantages. The presence of 500 of these orphans in the sanctuary, borne in the arms of the Sisters of Charity, powerfully aided the eloquence of the Saint. Inspired by the Divine principle of Charity, which yielded not in intensity, to maternal love, and no longer able to control the emotions of his feeling soul, he concluded a singularly eloquent address, with the following most tender and moving words : "Remember, Ladies, that compassion and charity have caused you to adopt these little creatures as your children ; you have been their mothers according to grace, since their natural mothers abandoned them ; determine now whether you also, will abandon them. Cease to be their mothers that you may be their judges ; their life and death are in your hands. I am going to take the votes ; it is time to pronounce their sentence, and to know whether you will no longer have pity on them. They will live if you continue your charitable care of them. On the contrary, they will infallibly die if you abandon them. Experience does not allow you to doubt it." The annals of oratory have nothing to compare with these words of St. Vincent. Never had eloquence a greater victory. The audience responded by their tears and sighs ; and they who had come, resolved to abandon an arduous enterprise, now determined, that at whatever cost, the good work should be continued. The king, with truly royal munificence, made a donation of the Chateau de Bicetre. It was, however, found to be inconvenient, and two houses were purchased in Paris. It ought to be stated in proof of the wisdom no less than the benevolence of the rulers of those times, that the Queen mother, that illustrious Austrian Princess, of whose good deeds honorable mention has already been made in this discourse, laid the foundation stone of the church of one of these houses, whilst through the further liberality of the king, Louis XIV., the income was considerably increased. The work continued to prosper. Some time later, 150,000 livres were not sufficient for the maintenance of the foundlings. The institution expanding with years, and extending every day wider and wider, the sphere of its pious labours, its annual expenses came to reach the large sum of 500,000 livres, (£25,000.)

What now, is wanting to the eulogium of Vincent of Paul ? If matter failed us, and our tongue ceased to speak his praise, it would be found on the lips of the hundreds and thousands of intelligent beings,

who owe to him, from age to age, their existence, their more happy lot in this world, their knowledge of God,—their salvation. "*Ex ore infantium perfecisti laudem.*"* What happiness, what glory is it not for them that their Sainted patron is so honored and exalted in the Church; that the Christian people of every race and clime unanimously hail him as the apostle of charity, the friend of humanity, the father of the orphan? But, still more, to HIM be glory, who, for his own all-wise and most merciful purposes, and in his own good time, gave to France and to the world, a faithful priest, a devoted pastor, who could conceive and carry into execution such great and beneficent designs.

III.

"Is that mother?" murmured a New England youth, whose lacerated bosom was heaving with the last struggle, in the Aceldama of an army hospital, as his glaring eye saw dimly the outline of a female form, and felt a soft hand on his forehead, where the drops of death were gathering. His thoughts had wandered far from the pallet where he lay, back to that village home where father and mother, and sisters and brothers, were thinking as the days wore on, how very soon they should welcome home the darling boy who left them so bravely, so proudly, to battle for the starry flag! And when recalled to partial consciousness by the gentle offices of the attending nurse, he fondly thought that "mother" had flown to his relief, on wings of mercy. Heroic lad! he, indeed, "went home," but not as he left on the lovely June morning, with a rose wreath on his bayonet, to the roll of stirring drums, and the waving of triumphant banners. The drums beat with muffled notes, and craped banners drooped mournfully, as they bore the young soldier to his rest."

If in that brimful cup of sorrow, there were drops of consolation, the boon was due to the daughters of St. Vincent, whose tender care soothed the pillow of the departing warrior, and bore up his sinking soul, on the wings of prayer, in its awful passage to eternity.

"The kind Sisters of Charity, whose holy mission is ever with the suffering, glide noiselessly about the hospitals, with nourishment for the feeble convalescent, with soothing palliatives for those writhing in the grasp of fell disease, and mutely kneeling by the bedsides of the dying. On battle-fields, amidst hurling shot and hissing shells, they have calmly walked to seek and save the wounded. Stalwart men, who lay gasping in agony unutterable, have shed tears like children, as they eagerly drank the restoring draught brought by these devoted

* Psalm viii. 3.

creatures. Would that our own Bayard Wilkeson, who, for hours, ebbed out his rich young blood on the gory plains of Gettysburgh, had fallen in the hands of these ministering angels! Then had not been written, by his stricken father, that eloquent psalm of death whose deep wail was grand as the dirge of Saul. Then had the sacred sheds of Forest Lawn not held that untimely grave.

Blessed, pure, angelic woman! If she lost us Eden, she wins for us, the more glorious Paradise of God!"—(*American Paper.*)

This is not the only tribute which the American Union, in its time of trial, has paid to the heroic "Sisters," whom the world owes to a Saint and a man of genius, whose chief inspiration was charity. Thus speaks a clergyman of one of the most respectable sects—the Methodist Episcopal persuasion, in the State of Ohio: "The war has brought out one result. It has shewn that numbers of the weaker sex, though born to wealth and luxury, are ready to renounce every comfort, and brave every hardship, that they may minister to the suffering, tend the wounded in their agony, and soothe the last struggles of the dying. God bless the Sisters of Charity, in this their heroic mission! I had almost said their heroic martyrdom! And, I might have said it; for, I do think that in walking those long lines of sick beds, in giving themselves to all the ghastly duties of the hospital, they are doing a harder thing than was allotted to many who mounted the scaffold or dared the stake."

Proud England, too, has acknowledged its debt of gratitude to the humble "Sisters." When the Russian Eagle threatened to seize, in his all-grasping talons, the expiring Empire of the Crescent, that generous nation despatched on an errand of mercy, to the terrific battlefield, and the no less dreaded hospital ward, one of her own heroic daughters. But only *one*. It was a rare example of devotedness. Alone it was inadequate. It failed to awaken in British hearts, the spirit of self-sacrifice. And England still said, "who will find me a woman, with the courage to confront the ocean and its waves, battle and death, to leave her native land and to go forth into exile among barbarous and pagan nations, to leave perhaps for ever, the peaceful and holy abode where she has passed many happy years, and transport herself to the midst of a rude soldiery?" And the Church which Vincent of Paul had so richly endowed, was able to reply: "I have no need to seek for such a woman; for, she is already with me. Behold a woman who knows only one fear—the fear of God." And so, the Sisters of Charity went forth on their errand. And, well did they perform their duty. "And, then, instead of tearing from their brow, the veil which crowns them, England felt bound to decorate them

with the military medal, in order to shew that the courage of a woman who devotes herself to God on the field of charity, is no less worthy of honor than the soldier who confronts the field of battle. This work was not done in Parliament. It was done before all the army. And, since that time, no person has dared to lift up his voice in favour of disturbing the hallowed tranquility of the Convent."—(*Cardinal Wiseman's Speech at Mechlin.*)

Vincent of Paul, likewise, inquired: Where shall I find a woman who, renouncing home and kindred, will heroically devote herself, for Christ's sake, to the relief of suffering? A woman, who superior to the weakness of her sex, shall have no other principle of action than charity? Who, raised above the world, as she is by this divine principle, and separated from its interests, shall cheerfully enter on a career of unceasing toil, encounter peril, brave disease in its most contagious and loathsome forms, go forth to the battle field, with more than the warrior's courage, stand undismayed, by the bed of death in its most hideous and ghastly moods, and when every face grows pale, and every lip quivers, and every heart quails at the dread approach of the grim visitor, alone speak soothing words and impart consolation to the departing soul? Not in vain, in an age of great minds, did the servant of God address this question to Catholic France. A Marillac responded to the call. And not this high-born and high-souled dame alone; but hundreds besides. In an incredibly short time the hospitals are filled with devoted nurses, whilst in every place where war spreads its gory banner, a new species of camp-followers appears. And who are they? Not those ominous beings, who vulture-like, hover near the scene of strife, and watch with fiendish anticipation, the moment when they shall pounce upon their prey. No. But those ministering angels, the daughters of St. Vincent, whose charitable care for the wounded and the dying, softens the scourge of war, and robs the grave of its terrors.

Already had the "Confraternities of Charity" which owed their existence to Vincent of Paul, laboured for seventeen years in the cause of the sick poor. Ladies of high rank, as well as persons of more moderate condition, were associated in these confraternities. In the beginning, the excellence of the work alone attracted numbers. Later, fashion began to prevail; and pious, but less fervent ladies were associated. The more zealous, even, could not on account of their husbands and families, encounter the pestilential air of hospitals, of ill-ventilated streets and houses. It became necessary therefore to have recourse to hired assistants. But, charity cannot be bought. New life must be imparted to the confraternities—a life wholly apart

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from the world's life,—the life of religion. And had no such life existed hitherto? Undoubtedly it had; and in all its excellence. (*Vita abscondita cum Christo in Deo.*) But, a new phase of this spiritual life originates under the guiding care of Vincent of Paul. The contemplative and the active are now blended. The holy—the sublime descends to immediate contact with all that is vile and contaminating in the moral as well as the material world, and far from contracting any stain, it rises from these depths, even as metal of proof comes from the furnace, and soars to greater heights, to new degrees of perfection, puts on a new being, lives a new life—a pure, exalted, indestructible life, which the powers of sin and death shall in vain assail.

Madame le Gras (Marillac) so long the faithful disciple of St. Vincent, so long the guardian angel of the poor, resolves to devote herself irrevocably, by a solemn vow, to the service of these objects of her tender care. Several pious maidens place themselves under her tutelage. Their education under the guidance of her wisdom and experience, as nurses of the sick poor, is speedily completed, and they go forth, everywhere, in the discharge of their sublime duties. The edification they afford is beyond all power of appreciation. "Their modesty, their eagerness to serve the sick, the sanctity of their lives charmed those who saw them. Such beautiful examples moved several persons of their age and sex, who came to offer themselves, to render like them, their humble services to Jesus Christ, in the persons of the poor." (Collet.)

Such was the commencement of that society of holy women, who are now universally known as the "Sisters of Charity." Already, in the time of St. Vincent's biographer, Collet,* they possessed thirty-five houses in Paris, and had extended their pious labours throughout France, Lorraine and Poland. This extraordinary success caused the sphere of their duties to be enlarged. It was not enough for their holy founder, to have saved from destruction, so many foundlings. He must also provide for them a Christian education. And, accordingly, he confided to the Sisters of Charity, the care of educating this less favored portion of the human family. The education of the daughters of the poorest families was also entrusted to the good Sisters. They were burthened likewise with the care of numerous hospitals, and called to minister, even, to the Galley Convicts. In order that they might be equal to the fulfilment of so many arduous duties, a rule of conduct, one would suppose, surpassing by far in the wisdom of its provisions, anything that had ever been devised, must have been laid down to them. And their rule undoubtedly, was a wise rule. It built little

* This celebrated Author and Theologian was born in 1693, and died in 1770.

upon observances, whilst it relied to the fullest extent, on the all-vivifying spirit of faith and charity. It prescribed no seclusion, no hair cloth, no austerity whatever. It only required that the Sisters should live in common, and, in winter, as in summer, rise at an early hour in the morning, pray devoutly, live frugally, use wine only for their health. Their self-denial was, to be ready, at all times for the duties to which they were chosen, in whatever circumstances they might be called on to discharge them, counting as nothing, the infectious and poisoned air of hospitals, the excess of misery they must often witness, and even the sorrows of the awful death scenes, which it should be their daily study to alleviate. Such was the rule of life by which the holy Sisters were destined to be guided. If you require *a rule*, a rule of monastic discipline, you look for it in vain in the Institute of the daughters of St. Vincent. Their sainted founder gave them no such rule. "You shall have no other monastery," said he, "than the dwellings of the poor, no other cloisters than the streets of cities and the wards of hospitals, no other law of seclusion than obedience to your superiors, no other veil than christian modesty. It is my wish that you should treat every sick person as an affectionate mother cares for her only son." His charitable foresight went so far, even, as to prescribe to them, in the most decided manner, that "they must cheer and gladden their patients, when they find them too much saddened by their calamities." Nor were these votaries of charity to be selected from any particular class of society. St. Vincent only required that they should be chosen in those families in which virtue was cherished as the most precious heir-loom.

That Lady of the house of Marillac (Madame le Gras,) whom history will long delight to contemplate leading the glorious array of holy maidens, who for so many ages, have been alike the brightest ornament and the strongest bulwark of the Church, resolved, as we have seen, to bind herself by an irrevocable vow, to the service of Jesus Christ, in the persons of the poor. But, Vincent of Paul, with wisdom worthy of so great a Saint, would not allow the Sisters of the new order to bind themselves by vow, for a longer period than one year; thus securing to them the merit of a frequent and entirely voluntary renewal of their self-sacrifice on the altar of charity, and leaving to them complete freedom of choice between the labours which they had undertaken, and the less onerous duties of the Christian life. Nor were their obligations to be assumed, until after a long period of probation—a five years' noviciate.

The order thus wisely founded, was in a few years, recognized as a public institution. It received the solemn sanction of Cardinal de Retz,

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Archbishop of Paris, and was confirmed in its social privileges, by Royal letters patent, which remain to this day, a monument no less of the piety of the French Sovereign of those times, than of the general esteem in which the Sisters of Charity were so early held.

The excellence of the Institution was still further proved. At first, St. Vincent would scarcely admit into the new community, any but persons of the middle order of society. But, in due course of time, young ladies of high rank, anxious to obtain a new luxury,—the luxury of doing good, sued for admission. A trial was resolved upon, and, although, in an age when piety among the wealthy and the great was far from being rare, there is still room for wonder that persons, delicately brought up, and accustomed to the richest attire, should resign themselves to lead a life of self-denial, wear a coarse habit, and serve, as if they were their masters, those less favored members of the human family, who would not have been deemed worthy to wait upon them in their worldly state.

The order of charity, so admirably constituted, has never ceased to enjoy the Divine protection. It has been blessed in all its ways, and in every age of its existence. It has lived and moved and had its being in the midst of every conceivable species of danger; and no evil has dared to approach its members. In moments of extreme peril, the power of God has become manifest in its defence; and the arm of his strength has been with it and around it, at all times and in all circumstances, warding off whatever could do it harm, or weaken its efforts in the cause of suffering humanity. Vincent of Paul entrusted to the Sisters, all his holy and benevolent labours. He required of them virtues that should be bounded only by the wants of mankind. He was himself the Father of the afflicted and they became as mothers to the forsaken. The foundling, the orphan, the forlorn widow and the plague-struck patient are their peculiar care. They are as nursing mothers to the aged poor, and to the infirm, and to the wounded soldier. With the delicacy which belongs to the finer mind of woman, when uncontaminated by vice and worldly fashion, they go in search of timid indigence, and console, whilst they considerably relieve. No species of human misery escapes them, and they wage perpetual war against the prolific parent of misfortune—ignorance,—by devoting themselves to the ungracious task of educating the children of the poor. Even the criminal victims of justice who suffer in prisons and penal ships, are not excluded from their most tender and all-embracing charity. Such are the ordinary duties of their state; and, they fulfil them, as if they were born to their fulfilment, not only without a murmur, but with joy, and in an habitually cheerful frame of mind. What to

us appears unutterably disgusting,—humiliating,—they, in the light of religion, consider as sweet and honorable. And, thus, these angels of mercy fly to the relief of misery, in the crowded city, as in the retirement of the country,—in the most obscure abodes of sorrow, as in public asylums; and hesitate not to descend even to the gloom of prisons, and to those dismal hulks, where the criminal and the reprobate expiate in hopeless toil, and galling chains, their violation of human laws.

With these heroic women around him, Vincent of Paul was equal to the most laborious and most difficult task that charity could impose on him. Without their aid, he would have endeavoured, in vain, to reform that immense hospital, the Hotel Dieu of Paris. If time had consecrated this institution, together with its pious and benevolent uses, there could also be traced its melancholy work of decay, in the abuses which prevailed. The Hotel Dieu, the greatest of all the benevolent institutions with which the religion of charity had enriched the world, was founded in the seventh century,—in those ages of faith and heroism when such large-minded men as the Charlemagne and the Alfred held rule. It was destined to relieve the sick poor, not of Paris and France only, but of all Europe. At the time of St. Vincent, it received annually, no fewer than twenty-five thousand patients. Persons of great piety and of the highest rank, whose consideration for the poor and the afflicted, induced them to visit the wards of this Hospital, were anxious that Vincent of Paul should undertake the necessary work of reform. Whilst he admitted that there was no ordinary amount of good to be done, he at first refused to interfere, on the ground that he had no authority for the correction of abuses. This prudent hesitation appeared only to increase the desire for reform. Those pious women, in whose souls, the love of God was more active and more powerful than is the love of the world in the votaries of fashion, were not to be repelled. They still insisted on reform, and that Vincent should be the reformer. They succeeded in prevailing on the Cardinal Archbishop of Paris, to express his wish that the holy Priest should no longer decline acceding to their wishes. Vincent of Paul was now convinced that he was called to this new work. He, accordingly, assembled another congregation of devout ladies, who in their turn, were destined to become Sisters of Charity. Of their number were Madame Goussault the widow of the Chief Justice, who had first urged the necessity of reform, the Ladies, de Ville Savin, de Bailleur, du Mecq, de Sainctot, de Pollaillon, Elizabeth d'Aligre, wife of the Chancellor of France, Anne Petau de Traversi, and the illustrious Marie Fouquet de Belle-Isle. These ladies with many others,—they were, in a short time no fewer than two hundred,—were constituted a

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society, having at its head, a President, an Assistant President, a Treasurer, and a Secretary. The members of this society, some of whom were born to royal honors,* left no means untried, which their ingenuity could devise, and the wisdom of their sage counsellor approve, in order to have the privilege of serving the poor. To be useful in the hospital, the holy Priest advised, that, they must do good without reproaching those who were at the head of the establishment, with having neglected it. They must act, openly, in the presence of all who may choose to be witnesses of their conduct. They must labour for the sake of the patients, to whose spiritual comfort it shall behoove them to minister, whilst they alleviate their bodily sufferings. These resolutions were strictly adhered to, and the labours of the society were crowned with complete success.

In order to be convinced of this fact so consoling to the christian mind, contrast the state of constraint, the hypocrisy, the sacrilege, which were the natural results of the indiscreet zeal of more recent times, which, contrary to the first wise institution of the great hospital, required that all who were admitted to its wards, should at once be subject to the discipline of the Catholic Church, with the extraordinary change of morals, the numerous and wonderful religious conversions, which were the rich and enduring fruit of the new *regime*, of which complete liberty of conscience was an essential element. In the first year of its operation, no fewer than seven hundred and sixty Turks, Calvinists and Lutherans embraced the Catholic faith. Thus did Vincent of Paul inculcate, in his day, by example as well as precept, the ever sound and unassailable doctrine of religious liberty. From him surely, the most enlightened champion of truth, it becomes us to learn what we ought to think in respect of a question so much agitated in our times, rather than from men of less capacious mind and less extensive learning, whose zeal,—zeal without knowledge, so frequently oversteps their prudence.

If the labours of the pious association, under the guidance of St. Vincent, were attended with such abundant spiritual blessings, they failed not, at the same time, to produce a rich harvest of material comfort to the victims of disease. In order that they might, the more effectually alleviate the condition of the patients, the good ladies rented a large house near the hospital, where they prepared every day, for a thousand sufferers, such delicacies as the sick and convalescent stand in need of. According to the recommendation of their holy founder, they literally cared for these poor people, as an affectionate mother cares for her only son. Such was the reputation of these good deeds

* For instance, the Duchess of Mantua.

in the City of Paris, that respectable and wealthy citizens begged to be received into the Hotel Dieu, defraying liberally their own expenses, on the sole condition that they should be treated precisely as were the pauper inmates of the establishment.

The funds contributed by the charitable ladies were as a new endowment to the hospital. But, the seven thousand livres which they annually spent, were as nothing, compared to the efforts which they afterwards made on behalf of innumerable multitudes of poor in the kingdom of France and the surrounding States.

With the aid of this Society, Vincent of Paul was able to found more charitable institutions than it is possible to enumerate in this discourse. Mention, however, must here be made of the House of Providence, which to this day, provides for so many wants, of the general hospital of Paris, and, above all, of the hospital of *Sainte Reine*, in Burgundy. This last named institution, proves more abundantly than many of St. Vincent's greater undertakings, how tender and considerate he was, when there was question of giving comfort to the poor. Medicinal waters, at their source, had been, hitherto, a luxury only for the rich and fashionable. This new species of hospital is opened, and twice, every year, four hundred poor patients enjoy the benefit, not only of change of air and scene, but of those healing waters, at the same time, which, formerly, only wealth could purchase. Surely, if any christian ever deserved to inherit the blessing promised to those "who understand for the needy and the poor," it was Vincent of Paul.

But this was not all. It is one of the characteristics of our age, that it delights to reform rather than to punish;—that it acknowledges and does penance for its iniquity in allowing so many to grow up from childhood, without education, without principle, by establishing reformatories for youth. This improvement, so generally supposed to be peculiar to these more enlightened times, can never be sufficiently extolled. But the merit of its initiation must be ascribed to the sainted reformer of an earlier age. It behooves us to remember, and not without gratitude, that Vincent of Paul exerted the great influence which he possessed, in founding those most benevolent institutions, in which the evils of a vicious education are, in a great measure, repaired.

There was no species of affliction that did not come within the range of his charity. We are accustomed, now-a-days, to see persons afflicted with insanity, kindly and rationally cared for. St. Vincent, anxious that such treatment should prevail in his time, established asylums, from which the richer and more magnificent institutions of the present age, would do well to take example.

With considerate foresight, the Saint made provision even for the

miseries of unborn generations. By means of pious foundations, he secured permanent annual supplies for those who in times to come, should suffer from such calamities, as inundations, hail storms, conflagrations.

A man who thus provided for the wants of his country, must surely have been surrounded by the respect and affection of his fellow-countrymen. And generally, he was so. But the fell spirit of party knows no distinction. The Saint, rather than make known the exertions which he had made, as we have seen, in the cause of the Fronde, rather than compromise, in the slightest degree, the Sovereign whose minister he was, by informing them that for their sake, and with a view to reconcile the contending factions, he had confronted the powerful Mazarin, remonstrated with the Queen Regent, and had all but incurred irretrievable disgrace, delivered up to the wrath of those people who believed that he was their enemy, his dearly cherished house of St. Lazarus. A mob of 800 vagabonds, in the garb of soldiers, gave vent to their fury, during three days, in pillaging the sacred abode of Vincent and his brethren. When nothing more remained, they wickedly set fire to his stores of firewood, and reduced them to ashes.

A reckless band of the same party, and of no better character, pillaged, at the same time, a farm which he possessed, near Versailles, and which was his principal resource. The work of destruction was complete. Neither grain, cattle nor furniture were left. When the news of such calamities reached him, he murmured not, but like Job of old, possessed his soul in patience. What would have elicited from other men, and good men, too, strong expressions of displeasure, only caused him to exclaim: "God be praised!"

And, not only did his piety remain unshaken. His charity appeared to increase, as the cloud of misfortune thickened around him. The number of the unfortunate grew with the growing troubles of the time. In the very height of the Fronde wars, and notwithstanding his severe losses, the servant of God generously shared his bread with the poor. To the number of two thousand, they were supplied every day, for three months, from his diminished resources. Nor was this all. Vincent's charity towards the poorest of his people, could be likened only to the Saviour's love for the most wretched sinners. He would not that any of them should perish. And rather than that they should want, were it only for one day, their daily bread, he subjects himself to a most painful sacrifice,—the privation of every material comfort. A kind of bread, made of rye and beans, becomes his only food. Of this, even, he partakes but sparingly, and, in order that the poor may have some fuel, he takes delight in suffering from the winter's cold.

Meanwhile, the angel of discord broods over unhappy France. The very measures which the Cardinal Minister has recourse to, in order to extinguish, tend only, to fan the flames of civil strife. Foreign invaders, availing themselves of the nation's distracted state, lay waste the rich Provinces of Picardy and Champagne. Famine and the sword have done their work. The soothing hand of charity alone, can, in some degree, repair the evil. The people of Paris, rejoiced to observe that the enemy had not been able to take the Town of Guise, think not of the desolation they have wrought. But the feeling soul of Vincent is moved. He despatches immediately to the scene of misfortune two of his companions. But, what could avail for the relief of such an extent of misery, the provisions they were able to carry with them, and their small sum of five hundred livres? They hasten to the neighbouring towns. But there, nothing remains that they can purchase. Famine, disease and death reign supreme in those cities, as well as in the country. The pious missionaries, at once, inform St. Vincent. The Saint, in his turn, appeals to the Ladies of the Association of Charity. The Foundlings, the Hotel-Dieu, the famine of Lorraine had already drained their resources. But, true charity is inexhaustible, and they resolve to make another sacrifice. In order to lighten, as much as possible, their burthen, Vincent asks the Archbishop of Paris to cause a general appeal to be made from the pulpits of the capital, in behalf of the desolated Provinces. And now, sixteen missionaries, together with Sisters of Charity, repair to the scene of distress. But, what avails their aid against such dire calamity? It seems, as if the angel of death had come down to execute the anger of Heaven. Such is the famine, that men are seen eating the earth, tearing off the bark of trees, and devouring the rags which cover them. "And oh! what fills us with unspeakable horror, as we relate it," write the good Priests, "they eat their own arms and hands, and, die in despair." The inhabitants of one city, St. Quentin, famed for the humanity of its people, resolve in their fear of a siege, to throw from their walls, the strangers who have sought refuge within them, to the number of seven to eight thousand.

Such a state of things could not last long; and yet, it lasted ten years, when at length, this cruel Spanish war was brought to an end, by the peace of the Pyrenees. And, during all those ten years, Vincent of Paul failed not to give abundant aid, robbed as he was by the unreasoning fury of the very people whom he saved, and exhausted moreover, by his charities, numerous as they were liberal. During the first years of this desolating foreign war, the Saint was able to send to the relief of the two suffering Provinces—Picardy and Champagne, no

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less an amount than fifteen, twenty, and sometimes, thirty thousand livres, every month. This was not all. Together with these sums, so considerable in the days of St. Vincent, were despatched waggon loads of bread, seed grain, cattle, farming implements, clothing for twenty thousand people of every condition, and even furnishings for the Churches which were plundered by the cruel hand of war. And, not for a few months, or years only, but as long as the calamity continued, these munificent supplies were regularly dispensed. As may well be conceived, there were no bounds to the people's gratitude. At the conclusion of the war, the Metropolitan City of Rheims, anxious to give adequate expression to the general feeling, decreed public and extraordinary honors. A solemn religious festival was held, in order to beg of Heaven the preservation of Vincent's valuable life, and that it would please the Author of all good to crown him with his choicest blessings.

But, by what means, it may well be asked, did Vincent of Paul accomplish so many and such great things? Was he not a poor man's son? And did he not in early life, reject the most tempting gifts of fortune? And, throughout his whole career, did he not prefer a poor and humble state to the world's favors, counting as nothing, the rich rewards, with which a grateful country was ever ready to crown his genius and his character? He delighted to be poor, and he remained poor. Abundance, nevertheless, flowed from his poverty, as from a rich and inexhaustible mine. Great institutions were created and magnificently endowed; the poor of the capital were fed; three Provinces, suffering under the scourge of war, were supplied with everything necessary, as in times of plenty; and, the charities of St. Vincent extended into foreign lands, affording the most opportune relief to the victims of civil strife, and persecution for conscience sake. But, "*is he not the son of the Carpenter? Whence, then, hath he all these things?*" The answer is at hand. To the enlightened Christian, it will appear plain and satisfactory. Others, if they will, may "*take offence.*" Mat. xiii, 55, &c.

To no miraculous agency can the great results of Vincent's charitable labours be traced. And yet, they were beyond what a Minister of State, or even a powerful Monarch could have accomplished. For, what other men, who succeed in their undertakings, owe to what is called fortune, Vincent of Paul was indebted to his truly Christian character. With him, virtue,—the most perfect virtue,—was a confirmed habit,—a second nature. The practice of such virtue is attractive. None could resist its influence. There were but few, who, whilst they admired, were not inclined to imitate such excellence. Thus did

his example become so extensively influential. Thus, did his charity, with extraordinary fecundity, produce charity in other men. There was but one voice as to the purity of his intentions; but one opinion of his sanctity, and confidence was universal. Not without reason was he considered, everywhere, as the angel of Divine Providence, for, whilst sharing, in a high degree, by sublime contemplation, the nature of the Seraphim,—rapt in divine love,—he never lost sight of those duties, the duties of fraternal affection, which are fulfilled no less by the true christian, than by the faithful and loving spirits who execute the will of Heaven. (*Ministri ejus qui facitis voluntatem ejus.*) Vincent of Paul was actuated in all his ways, by the twofold love, which made him the devout servant of God, and the most successful benefactor of his fellow-men. In these two things is the whole law,—religion in all its excellence and plenitude,—religion to which mankind owe the greatest of their benefactors,—the Saints,—and, above all, that Saint, whose light having shed its genial and cheering ray over his own age, still shines with undiminished lustre, and will continue throughout all time, to irradiate the world.

Nor must it be forgotten that Vincent of Paul lived in an age which could appreciate so great a character. The well-informed christian mind only, can understand the man whose life is governed by the principles of christianity. At a period of darkness, he would have led the life of a Saint, indeed, but the luminous book of his sublime conduct would have remained unread. He would have set before the minds of an incredulous world, the same example of disinterested—heroic charity, but, it would have found no followers. And, that eloquence which faith inspired, and which moved so profoundly, the people and their rulers, which poured, so opportunely, and so continuously, the wealth of the rich into the lap of indigence, would have been unheard, or would have fallen upon unwilling ears. But, Vincent of Paul was a great mind, among great minds, and the glory of his age will only fade from the remembrance of men, when his own imperishable name shall have been forgotten. In an age of luxury, of extravagance, of selfishness, of incredulity, he would have labored, in vain, to create those magnificent establishments of charity, which, whilst they proclaim the victory of the Saint,—the victory of religion, will remain till the latest generations, the most splendid monuments of the faith, the humanity, the liberality of so great an epoch. In vain would Vincent have endeavoured, in less favored times, to marshal around him, the wealth, the power, the character of his country. In vain would such influences have existed. But, the man of God lived and moved and had his being in an atmosphere of light,—the light of Divine Faith,—and,

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society in all its grades, arrayed itself on his side. France, appreciating his zeal, his patriotism, his charity unfeigned, deputed the best and noblest of her children to execute his behests. And, thus, arose that ever memorable "Congregation of Charity," which, during the long period of twenty years, was the powerful lever, by which he moved the public mind, sustained three desolated Provinces, saved the capital from the horrors of famine, endowed his country with the most useful institutions, and gave succour to foreign lands and distant peoples, in the hour of their distress. Was it possible that any other than an eminently christian age, should have given to the servant of God, such fellow labourers, as the Queen Regent of France, the Queen of Poland, the Princess de Conti, the Duchess d'Aiguillon, the General, Marquis de Gondi, and, that most pious daughter of the house of Marillac,—Madame le Gras, whose name lives in the annals of benevolence, as the first and most devoted of that bright array of "Sisters of Charity," whose works of surpassing goodness, are, alike, the glory of religion and the stay of humanity,—that Madame le Gras, who alone deposited for charitable uses, in the hands of Vincent of Paul, more than two millions of livres? And not these only, but all who believed that it was their duty to be "followers of good works." (Titus ii. 14.) Bishops, Princes, Magistrates, rich citizens of every rank thronged around the Saint, "anxious to obey the promptings of so pure a mind, as the undoubted orders of Divine Providence." (President Molé.)

Was their confidence misplaced? The history of St. Vincent affords the most luminous reply. He became identified with the cause of poverty and suffering. Personally, he was unselfish. As the representative of the poor, he was equally disinterested. He would not that they should be guilty of ingratitude towards their benefactors. Indigence becomes the portion of the children of a rich man who had chosen him for the depository of his charities. Vincent, on hearing of their misfortunes, goes to visit them, and makes over to them, as if it were a patrimony, to which they were, in justice, entitled, a legacy of eight thousand livres of annual rent, which he had possessed during twelve years. "You will ruin everything," said his friends. "Better, so," was his reply, "than prove ungrateful."

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In those establishments of charity, greater and more numerous than at any former time it had been given to one man alone to create, will ever be read the best eulogium of Vincent of Paul. But, he will be remembered, also, as one of the greatest statesmen of his time. As the chief counsellor of his Sovereign in all affairs of religion, he set the

example of all those political virtues, which in this age of improvement and reform, the most enlightened peoples are so anxious to behold in the rulers of the State. The government held the power of nominating to vacant Bishoprics. The Queen Regent, Anne of Austria, piously and wisely desiring that duly qualified persons only, should be appointed to such important offices, delegated this power to St. Vincent. The Council consisted, indeed of four members.* But although the Prime Minister, Cardinal Mazarin, was one of them, no appointment could be made, without the sanction of the Saint. And most faithful he was to the trust reposed in him. He invariably studied to find out the character and qualifications of candidates for ecclesiastical preferment, never allowing himself to be swayed either by political influences, private friendship, or the most urgent representations of interested and powerful relatives. Understanding well that true merit is modest and retiring, he carefully sought the most worthy, who shrank, instinctively, from the indecent contest for promotion, which was so prevalent.

It suited the policy of the powerful Premier, to follow a very different line of conduct. Political influence must be acquired, and when acquired, retained. For this purpose, it was necessary to secure at any cost, the interest of the leading families of the country. Any scruple the Cardinal Minister may have had, was out of slight avail against custom and the dire necessity of his position. The highest ecclesiastical dignities, rich abbeys and other benefices, in the gift of the crown, offered a ready means for purchasing the favor of the great. At first, Mazarin made appointments without deigning to consult his colleague. But Vincent withheld his approval and they were cancelled. Thus were the schemes of an ambitious minister defeated by a man whom no influence could corrupt, to whom the favor of the great was no temptation. The Queen Regent, zealous for the purity of the Church, strenuously supported Vincent, and ordered that no appointment should take effect without his sanction. Thus was the power of the Saint confirmed. In vain was he now met by a new species of opposition. His enemies, baffled in every way, had recourse to the weapons of the weak and the cowardly. They devised a foul calumny, hoping thus to destroy him in the mind of the Queen, his colleagues in office, and the people. They pretended to have found out that he who was, apparently, so much opposed to simony, was in practice, no enemy to this crime,—that he had, in exchange for a library and a sum of money, procured a benefice for an ambitious man. This report was, at first, cautiously circulated, communicated with all the precautions necessary

* An eminent writer of the time, Madame de Melleville, says that Vincent of Paul was the President.

for imposture, only to confidential parties. Gradually, it became public. It was made known to Vincent, by one of his friends. He was deeply affected by the atrocious imputation; and on the first impulse, began to write a letter to repel the base attack. But, oh! admirable self-control! Surpassing meekness! Profound humility! He exclaimed, as he threw down the pen: "Ah! unhappy man that I am! what was I about to do? What! I desire to justify myself, and I have only now heard that a Christian, falsely accused at Tunis, passed three days in torments, and died at last, without a word of complaint. And, I would excuse myself! No, no, it shall not be." And, so, he allowed the calumny to take its course. Public opinion was in his favor. It was not long till the few who thought otherwise, abandoned their unfounded prejudices. There were not wanting those who beheld, in the death of the slanderer, which happened soon after, the hand of Him who chastises the calumniator, and vindicates the character of his victim.

Far from staining his conscience, and tarnishing his name by the practice of simony, the servant of God could never be induced, in the days of his earthly ministry, to accept any favor, at the hands of those who had recourse to his influence. A powerful magistrate who was anxious to obtain an abbey for his son, offered on condition that Vincent would not oppose him, to enrich the house of St. Lazarus, by procuring the restoration of certain rights and properties that had been alienated from it. "Never, for all the possessions in the world," replied the Saint, "will I do anything against God or my conscience."

If Vincent was so disinterested and magnanimous as to be completely beyond the reach of corruption, even in its least revolting shapes, he also displayed great wisdom in the exercise of his ministerial duties. Almost all the houses of the "Congregation of the Mission" which he had established, were poor, strictly adhering to the law they had imposed upon themselves, never to require any retribution on account of the important duties which they fulfilled. There were many benefices in his gift, as a minister of the Crown, and it would not have been difficult for him, to add some of them to the funds of his Congregation. But, he never thought of such a thing. He shewed the same wisdom and disinterestedness, in rejecting all offers of money, when there was question of obtaining his influence at Court in favor even of measures that could not prove injurious to the people. In regard to one such measure, which was calculated to affect the interests of the Clergy, he was only heard to say: "God preserve me from it; I would rather die than say a single word on the subject."

Never would he avail himself for his own advantage of the power

which his position gave him, at Court, and throughout the Kingdom. Any favor that the Queen Regent intended for him, he caused to be bestowed on some other person. All were agreed that there was nothing that he could not have obtained from that magnanimous Princess. It was confidently said among the courtiers, that Her Majesty graciously designed to ask for him a Cardinal's hat. But the manner in which he received the friends, who went to congratulate him on his good fortune, shewed that it was of no use to press upon him such honors.

His wisdom was alike manifest in the care with which he transacted public affairs, and his admirable reserve in regard to matters that were discussed in the Council of State. He never came to a decision without mature reflection,—without considering, attentively, all that could be said on either side of a question. But—and, here, we recognize the vigorous mind,—the great character,—whenever he had resolved on any plan, he was prompt in execution, as he had been careful and circumspect in deliberation. We now learn, without surprise, that he was not to be disconcerted by failure, any more than he could have been elated by success. Truly noble, as he was sincerely pious, in the presence of the ~~Great~~ of Royalty itself, he was dignified, whilst unassuming. In the conduct of affairs he was diligent without pretension. And, whilst opportunities frequently occurred of making friends at the expense of principle, no consideration could make him swerve from the path of duty. Continual intercourse with persons of every rank and character—with those who were wicked, cunning, scheming and deceitful, as well as with the most worthy and straight-forward, would have sufficed to shake an ordinary mind, but disturbed not his equanimity. Nature and religion had combined to make him great. And, he remained tranquil and unmoved, when disappointed ambition gnashed its teeth amid the turmoil of civil strife, and, even when the people who misunderstood him, violated his altar and his hearth. *Justum et tenacem propositi virum.*

Mazarin, the Prime Minister, was actuated by motives very different from those which guided the conduct of his reverend colleague. And when his power was once firmly established, he conceived that it would not be very difficult to make the Saint bend to his wishes. But by no consideration could Vincent be gained; and, the Queen Regent, magnanimously sustaining him, he was able to resist successfully, the tortuous policy of the Cardinal Premier. Mazarin was indeed vanquished, when he could take revenge in no more dignified way, than by sneering at the humble garb, in which the Saint came to attend the Council of State.

They who were truly noble, acted very differently. The high-born Prince of Condé, one day, observing Vincent at Court, asked him to sit down beside him. "Your Highness," replied the Saint, "does me too much honor, in admitting me to your presence. Are you not aware that I am the son of a poor countryman?" "Good manners, and a good life," answered this great Prince, "constitute a true nobleman." Vincent's merit, he continued to observe, had been long known and appreciated. And causing the conversation to turn on some controverted point of canon law, he was enabled to remark, how accurately, and lucidly, the Saint treated such subjects. The Prince now took occasion to reprimand him, politely, for having spoken of himself, so contemptuously, and, then, repairing to the Queen's apartment, he congratulated Her Majesty, on the choice which she had made of a man, who was so capable of affording her all requisite aid in carrying out her beneficent designs.

And, indeed, if the plans of reform, proposed by St. Vincent, had been fully acted on, this excellent Princess would have seen her wishes realized. Pensions, coadjutorships, the age for promotion to benefices, benefices which had lapsed—all these things, in which, abuse had been carried to its utmost extent, would have been reformed, and, every order in the French Church, would have been restored to its pristine splendour.

Opposed as he was, however, Vincent was able to effect numerous and beneficial reforms. The religious communities of France were indebted to his wisdom, zeal, and influence, for the restoration of their discipline, as well as many other great improvements. The regular canons of St. Geneviève and their Abbot, in a formal letter to Clement XI., acknowledge their obligations to the Saint. His reforms in the monasteries of the Diocese of Cahors, are recognized by eminent contemporaries. Chancelade and Grandmont, Bontay and Rangeval of the Premonstratensian order, the orders of St. Anthony and of St. Benedict, together with the congregation of St. Maur, warmly profess their gratitude for the salutary reforms which Vincent of Paul introduced into their communities, or assisted them in introducing.

Even still more remarkable were the reforms which the Saint promoted in the French communities of religious women. In those Abbeys in which the right of election existed, he caused that right to be thoroughly respected, thus rendering unavailable, everything like intrigue, the influence of relatives, and even recourse to the authority of the Sovereign. *Briefs of continuation*, obtained for the purpose of prolonging the term of office, in favor of Abbesses elected according to the rules of their communities, for three years, he likewise discoura-

ged, wisely considering that even nuns, when not of mature years, and great experience, are less apt to forget themselves in charges of high responsibility, when the time of their authority is properly limited. When an Abbey, the nomination to which lay with the King's government, became vacant, Vincent could never be prevailed upon, to place in such a situation, any other than a Religious, of tried ability and well known regularity. He went so far, on one occasion, as to remove from the government of a convent, a nun, whose aunt had made it a pleasure house for her family, and where she was sumptuously entertained at the cost of what was necessary for the decent support of the establishment. On account of this measure, insults and threats were levelled at him in lavish profusion. But, he held his peace. And yet, a word to the Queen Regent would have caused the just punishment of his persecutors. *Coadjutorships*, which were founded on mere friendship, and by which nuns of very little piety and zeal were often promoted to the government of a community, he never could sanction. On occasion of resignations, he was particularly careful to obtain all necessary information regarding the virtue and merits of the parties in whose favor such resignations were made. He was no less careful to banish from communities of women, all quarrelling and divisions. In the Abbey of Estival, he restored tranquility and order, having sent thither, for this purpose, by Royal authority, four Religious of Val-de-Grace. The same happy results were obtained in the Abbey of La Perrine, through the aid of Mother Louise, Eugénie de Fontaine, who laboured in the work of reform, with all the meekness and unction of a St. Francis of Sales.

Vincent of Paul, whilst he laboured with all his power to promote discipline and true piety, was the declared enemy of everything extravagant and fanatical. In religious establishments, especially, did he wage war upon fanaticism. There were some in his day, who, as they pretended, had discovered new means of salvation, unknown to antiquity, by which the most sublime degree of perfection was to be attained. St. Paul himself, knew nothing about real devotion and spirituality. God had chosen these fanatics, to make known this higher way, and even to reform the Church. It was thought that, in the time of Louis XIII., these enthusiasts had disappeared. But, in the Dioceses of Paris and Bazas, they appeared themselves, for the promulgation of their ideas, of the commotions by which the minority of Louis XIII. was disturbed. The Convents of Religious women were the first conquests, at which they aimed; and, they succeeded in surprising into their heresy, a considerable number of persons of every condition and of either sex. Fortunately, the evil had not yet taken root, when Vincent was in-

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formed of its existence. And, now, behold the means by which he studied to suppress it. He selected persons of undoubted learning and virtue, whose work it should be, to point out the error and the danger of the new teachings. Their labours were, in a short time, crowned with success. The fanatics finding themselves observed, and their errors exposed, ceased to dogmatize.

Vincent of Paul was no more an enemy to true liberty, than that sound legislation which, for the well-being of society, restrains the wicked. Blasphemy and duelling are crimes which ought to be discouraged, and, as far as possible, put down, by the laws of all countries.

In France, St. Vincent legislated against these crimes, and procured the publication of the excellent edicts by which the reign of Louis XIV. was so auspiciously commenced. The law which punishes libel, is no violation of the liberty of the press. And Vincent of Paul was guilty of no infraction of this liberty when he caused measures to be adopted against those pernicious books, which, in language that cannot be described, advocating libertinism and impiety, are the foulest libel on the public opinion of a people, and tend to sap the very foundations of morality. At the same time, no man ever shewed more compassion for criminals. His care for the Galley convicts need only be called to mind. And now, the state prisoners, in the Bastille, experience his considerate kindness. Observing that there is none to speak to them a word of consolation, he induces the Queen Regent to appoint a learned and pious ecclesiastic, whose duty it shall be to address to them the most salutary exhortations. He thus, by disposing them to be reconciled with God, paved the way for their restoration to the favor of their sovereign.

All orders of the Church had reason to rejoice in the elevation of Vincent of Paul to the counsels of his Sovereign. But, none more than the Episcopate of France. In an age, when Government patronage was carried to its utmost extent, the Bishops who, in so many cases, owed their promotion to royal favor, and, not unfrequently, to the interested views of a Minister of State, could not fail, occasionally, to be in such a position as to require the aid of powerful influences at Court. On all such occasions Vincent stood their friend. His influence was always at hand, also, for the reconciliation of differences. And, as he was convinced, that it was by the teaching of the Pastors of the Church, (*fides ex auditu*;) not by coercive measures, that the cause of truth must be promoted, and heresy corrected, he caused a Bishoprick to be established at La Rochelle, which was the chief bulwark of the false philosophy of the time.

When patronage prevailed, and was wholly in the hands of the Sov-

erign, there must have been many Bishops who owed their elevation to Court favor. There existed a right of appeal from their decisions; and, fortunately; as it was a counterpoise to State favor and Ministerial intrigue. Unfortunately, on the other hand, it was a powerful weapon in the hands of such of the Clergy as abhorred the salutary yoke of discipline. Vincent could not, indeed, emancipate the Church from the State trammels, by which her beneficial action was so terribly impeded. But, whilst he took care that in his time patronage should not be unduly exercised, he labored also to prevent the right of appeal from being used in such a way, as to frustrate the end for which it was established. The temporal power did not always cause the mitre to descend on the most reflective and deserving heads. The weapon of Church censures, accordingly, was, sometimes, more rashly than judiciously employed. Vincent of Paul, whilst he treated the Bishops with the utmost respect and reverence, earnestly represented to them that the most suitable and most powerful arms they could have recourse to, were mildness, patience, and even self-humiliation. Such means it behooved them to employ, as long as there remained any hope of success, rather than widen the breach, and cause, perhaps, irremediable evils, by issuing sentences of excommunication.

When Vincent had once overcome the adverse influence of the Cardinal Minister, there was none to oppose him in the nomination to vacant Sees. He was singularly judicious in his choice of Bishops. And, it fell to his lot, to appoint so many, all, without exception, men of the greatest merit, that the pious Fléchier, Bishop of Nismes, so celebrated for his learning and eloquence, hesitated not to say that the Clergy of France owed to St. Vincent, their prosperity, their splendour and their glory.

Nor was there only Flechier, who, alone, would have sufficed to establish the fame of any age or country. But, the Church was indebted also, to the school of Vincent of Paul, for such men as Fenelon, and Bourdaloue, and Massillon, and Bossuet of Meaux, that most learned Bishop, of whom it was truly said, that "he was a Bishop in the midst of the Court, and worthy to preside at Ephesus and Nicea."

These men, apostolic in their lives, as in their teaching, were preachers of the truth, in their day, fearless as they were eloquent; and their doctrines still enlighten the world. If the great monarch on whose reign they conferred imperishable renown, and who, by means of royal patronage, held in his hands, the destinies of the Church, had only chosen to be guided by their counsels, religion might have passed unhurt, through its most trying ordeal,—the political whirlwind, which, in the succeeding century, swept both itself and its ministers from the

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land. If the monarch had believed, as Fénelon and Bossuet, walking in the footsteps of Vincent of Paul, had so often taught, that error, in its headlong course, may not be stayed,—that the cause of truth in its progress to final victory, may not be sustained, by penal laws, and the sword of the state, the reader of history would be spared the darkest and the saddest page, in the annals of any country,—that which records the persecuting edicts of a Christian King.

V.

The temporal ministry so long, and so beneficially exercised by Vincent of Paul, fills one of the brightest pages of European history. But the character of his age was still more gloriously redeemed by the zeal, the devotedness, the unparalleled success with which he fulfilled the duties of his great spiritual office. If, at any time,—it could have been said that the works of this sublime ministry, so essential to the happiness of mankind, had become* rare upon the earth, no such reproach could with any justice, be addressed to the age of St. Vincent. Surrounded by that association of learned and pious Clergymen, known as “the Congregation of the Mission,” the servant of God extended his apostolic labours to those portions of the country which suffered most from the calamities of war, or were from other causes afflicted with spiritual destitution. Many Cities and Dioceses of France participated in the blessings thus liberally dispensed. Marseilles was not forgotten. The services of St. Vincent’s brethren abounded there, so much, in good fruit, that the Duchess of Aiguillon, in order to perpetuate a mission that was proving so highly beneficial, permanently established in the city, no fewer than four missionaries.

Sedan was equally favored. The Archbishop of Rheims, Eleanor d’Estampes, lent his powerful aid, and confided to the missionaries, the spiritual charge of the city. These clergymen whose piety, sincere as it was profound, had no tincture of superstition, invariably acted with consummate prudence. Whilst setting the example of every virtue, they studied to accommodate themselves to the circumstances and character of the people. By such means, did their talents and learning become available to the cause of truth; and, many were gained to the Church. On their arrival, there were only 1,500 Catholics in Sedan. In the course of some time, the face of things was completely changed. And, other communities having been established through the influence of St. Vincent, no fewer than two-thirds of the inhabitants embraced the Catholic faith. Need it be asked if such fruits were ever the result of penal laws, or of coercion in any of its hydra forms?

* *Sermo Domini pretiosus.* (1 Kings iii. 1.)

Peter de Gondi Duke de Retz, who understood so well the incomparable merit of St. Vincent, invited him to establish a mission in the small city of Montmirel. This work, also, through the generous aid afforded by Francois Mallier Bishop of Troyes, the servant of God was able to accomplish. The people of this place beheld with delight, the permanent establishment amongst them, of the disciples of the holy pastor, whose own virtue and apostolic zeal they had so long witnessed. Their esteem and veneration remain to this day, undiminished. Whilst Montmirel thus honors so great a Saint, it rejoices, as has been most wonderfully shewn, in his powerful protection.

A Seminary was established at Cahors under the direction of the Priests of the mission. In Saintes and many other Dioceses, their labours were attended with abundant fruit, whilst they lost not in any degree, the great principles by which their founder was anxious that they should never cease to be guided. "Never," says the Saint, in a letter written in the midst of these extraordinary labors, "have more regularity, more union and cordiality prevailed than at present."

Already in the lifetime of St. Vincent, his reverend brethren and disciples seek the palm of martyrdom among the unbelieving hordes of Barbary. Nor yet was this great and legitimate glory the object of their ambition. Sharing the spirit of their founder, who knew what it was to be a captive among the heathen and the stranger, they were moved with sympathy for their fellow-christians who groaned under the cruel yoke of Turkish bondage, and longed to effect their liberation, at the risk of their own liberty and even of their life. They had learned also from him whose apostolic lessons were their rule of conduct, how meritorious it is to enlighten pagan darkness and conquer souls to Christ. Among these soldiers of the cross, must be named with profoundest reverence, Julien Guerin, to whom was assigned the mission of Tunis. In no man's life and conversation was the operation of Divine grace more manifest. None was ever more richly endowed with the gift of announcing to advantage, the truths of religion. So self-denying, was he, that, it was said of him, that he lived without eating and drinking. He laboured unceasingly, and with such ardour, that the preservation of his life was scarcely less than a miracle. He exulted in the idea of being favored to suffer like the martyrs of an earlier day. It would have been his greatest happiness to lay down his life amongst his captive brethren and their barbarian tormentors. "You will get yourself hanged in Barbary," said one of his friends. "This would not suffice," he replied, "for the love I bear to my blessed Lord and Saviour. I sincerely hope that God will grant me the favour to be impaled or to suffer something worse." It is no matter of surprise

that the labours of such a man were attended with extraordinary success. Martyrdom, in the strict sense of the term, was not his destiny. But he had not yet been four years in Barbary, when he became a martyr to his charity. Whilst ministering to the plague-struck captives, he was attacked by the fatal malady, and thus ended a meritorious career, by a death no less precious in the sight of Heaven. He had obtained through his influence with the Bey, that a successor should take his place; and Vincent of Paul at once sent to the post of danger Jean le Vacher of the Diocese of Paris. This holy man was privileged to give consolation to his fellow-christians in captivity, and even to preach the gospel to the Turks of Algiers and Tunis, for more than five and thirty years. Moslem persecution overtook him at last. He was the first of the disciples of St. Vincent who fell by the hands of the heathen,—the first whose zeal and charity and apostolic labours were crowned with martyrdom.

And let it not be said that Vincent of Paul in sending his reverend brethren to the States of Barbary, was unduly swayed by his enthusiasm. Holding a chief place in the counsels of one of the greatest sovereigns of Europe, he must have felt that he would have been wanting in duty to his government, to his fellow-christians and to his country, if he had not extended the powerful arm of his protection to those unfortunate people of all christian countries who were daily falling into the merciless hands of the wicked Corsairs, who infested every sea, and who, having first fettered and degraded their unhappy victims, sold them, like cattle or other merchandize, in the market places of Tunis and Algiers. In the time of St. Vincent, there were no fewer than 25,000 christians in a state of slavery among the infidels of those places. Some of these, we are assured, were treated no worse than the lowest class of domestics in European countries. But, for one humane master who so treated his slaves, there were hundreds who exercised habitually, the greatest cruelty. Wicked renegades were often employed as drivers. From such taskmasters, the faithful christians had no mercy to expect. They were cruelly beaten by them on the slightest pretexts, and were doomed to undergo the severest kinds of toil—to saw marble under the burning sun of Africa, “until their tongues hung out like those of overworked dogs.” Chained to the oar at sea, they were obliged to row incessantly in the scorching heat of summer, as well as in the extreme cold of winter. Such was the hard fate of such captives as were detained in the sea-port towns. Those who were doomed to slavery in the interior of the country fared no better. They were obliged to labour without any relaxation, in forests, coal mines and stone quarries. It were hard to say whether

for persons, many of whom had been delicately reared, such severe and unremitting toil, or the unwholesome climate proved most injurious. But, as if all this had not been sufficient to torture and destroy them, still more heavy and degrading labours were imposed, more cruel outrages inflicted. "At Biserte," says M. Le Vassier, "I found forty shut up in a stable so small, that they could scarcely move. They were all chained in pairs, and obliged to grind day after day, with a small hand mill, a stated quantity of flour, which surpassed their strength."

Add to all this, the temptations by which the captive christians were surrounded. The blandishments of their captors alluring them, at one time, to every kind of fatal indulgence, at another, their savage threats driving the weak and the timid to apostacy, and we shall have some idea of the evils which Vincent of Paul felt that it was his duty to remedy.

There were numerous ecclesiastics amongst the slaves of Barbary. These, without the salutary discipline, which St. Vincent succeeded in establishing, would not always have presented, in their life and conversation, that example, which, whilst it edified the christian laity, and saved them from the danger of apostacy, put to silence the ignorance of the unenlightened heathen, affording no pretext for blaspheming the God of christians on account of his ministers. In order to produce such great results, the Church was regularly established under the government of a Vicar Apostolic, and, wise regulations promulgated in the name of and by the authority of the Holy See.

To what extent, the slaves generally, derived benefit from these measures, will never be known. It is, at least, certain that a very great number were strengthened in their faith, and in the practice of every virtue, whilst, it is equally beyond doubt, that before the arrival of the missionaries the condition of the wretched captives was truly deplorable. Utterly forsaken, and a prey to the most cruel reflections, "weighed down, moreover, by the prospect of an endless captivity, the bitterness of which was assuaged by no one, some cut their throats or strangled themselves. Others, in a paroxysm of fury, fell upon their masters to kill them, and in punishment of their revolt, were burned alive. A great number denied their faith, and in order to free themselves from temporal sufferings, precipitated themselves into those of eternity. The Priests of the mission stayed these excesses by moving discourses, by alms prudently distributed, and above all, by the administration of the sacraments which are the sources of fortitude and salvation."—(Collet.)

What consolation, what happiness must it not have afforded to those people, torn as they were from their country and their homes, to

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assemble around the altar of their fathers, to hear, as of old, the sacred chaunts which cheered their infancy, and infused into their yet tender and impressive minds, the sweet lessons, the sublime inspirations of religion! And such was their favored lot through the zealous labours of the pious brethren of St. Vincent. In Biserta, Algiers and Tunis, no fewer than twenty-five bagnios became churches, where the christian captives regularly met on Sundays and days of festival, in order to take part in the great act of christian worship,—the offering of that “clean oblation,”—that “sacrifice,” which was appointed to be offered in “every place,” and by which, it was foretold that the name of God should be “great among the Gentiles.” (Malachias i. 11.) Wonderful prophecy! It is no sooner fulfilled amidst the unbelieving hordes of Barbary, than the “Gentile” stands back in awe and reverence, whilst the christian, in his lowly temple, devoutly kneels before the stainless victim. That “fear” which is the “beginning of wisdom,” urges the heathen still further on, and he not only reverences the sanctuary of the living God, but also, with confiding steps, crosses its portals, and adores, “in spirit and in truth.”

Sorrowing christians were consoled and confirmed, such weaker brethren as had fallen from the faith were reclaimed, and many unbelievers were gained to the cause of truth. Thus, was built up anew, that Church of Africa, which reflected undying honor on the early ages, and bequeathed to our own times, the most sweet and enduring memories. Oh, surely, there is nothing wanting to the eulogium of the Saint, who, in the midst of pagan darkness, restored the church, and revived the glorious epoch of Augustine. May that church for ever flourish! The Moslem power which crushed it so long, is now struck down in Africa, so cherished of old; and, never more, may the usurping infidel unfurl his Crescent flag in defiance of the Cross. Peace now reigns, where war, erewhile, achieved its necessary work,—the work, not of fell revenge, but of sweet humanity and justice, that had been so long trampled under foot. Learning and the kindred arts, modern civilization with its genius for improvement, education which excludes not, either “bond or free,” high or low, “Greek or barbarian,”—all follow in the wake of religion, which, like a guardian angel, watches over and guides with unerring rule, the development of a people, which is manifestly destined to occupy an important place amongst the nations of the earth, and to fill, as in the past, one of the brightest pages in the annals of mankind.

Equally great was the success of St. Vincent's endeavours to propagate the gospel in all the countries from Madagascar to the Hebrides, where his brethren and disciples exercised their apostolic ministry.

If there now remains to Poland, one true and inexhaustible source of consolation in her extreme sorrow, that heroic nation is indebted for this inestimable boon, to Vincent of Paul, more than to any individual besides. A fatal system of unbelief was rapidly gaining ground. Socinianism was spreading everywhere its gangrene roots. It was already sapping the foundations of the christian edifice, when the enlightened brethren of St. Vincent raised their voice of warning and dispelled the dark and dismal cloud that was gathering over Poland. Thus was a people, who had nobly shown themselves, in days of trial and of general danger, christendom's unconquerable bulwark, once more Christian and Catholic to the core; and, thus, also, to that people, possessing the Catholic faith in its purity, and in all its large and comprehensive teachings, was it given, at a comparatively early period, to understand the great principle of religious liberty,* and to preach aloud this principle, in the midst of the political darkness which enveloped the surrounding nations. Such was the conduct of enlightened Poland, ere yet she had to contend for her own liberty; and not for liberty only, but also, for her place amongst the nations, her very existence as a people, her ancient glory, her children's lives, her homes, her altars,—in the face of a tyranny worthy, not of dark and barbarous ages, only, but of the worst and foulest days of heathen ignorance,—a tyranny which finds no parallel in the history of modern times, and, which never was surpassed even by the blackest and most crushing despotisms of the degenerate and benighted pagan world.

In Corsica and Piedmont, Ireland and Scotland St. Vincent nobly sustained his brethren of the missions whilst they laboured with untiring zeal to encourage and console their fellow christians. In the two former countries, the only obstacles they met with arose from the

* Prince Czartoryski, in a recent letter, written in reply to M. Dupin's speech in the French Senate, says, on the authority of the illustrious historian, De Thou, that when in 1572, a French Prince, known since as Henry III., presented himself as a candidate for the Polish throne, he was not elected, till after his envoy, Bishop Montluc, had solemnly declared that he had no hand in the massacre of St. Bartholemew.

When, the following year, a deputation of Bishops and Catholic Senators went to Paris, they would not hail Henry of Valois as their King, until he had taken the oath to maintain peace between dissenters.—“*Pacem inter dissentes servabo.*”

M. Dupin shewing a degree of ignorance unworthy of so eminent a statesman, had also asserted that the Poles have been remarkable for their prodigious intolerance towards the creeds of others, and have never given quarter to the Jews. To this, Prince Czartoryski replies: “Poland has not only, at all periods of her history, afforded an asylum to the Jews, but, she has welcomed other victims of religious persecution. She received the Hussites, the Huguenots, and the Protestant refugees of divers nations at divers epochs. The great law of our Diet of 1572 proclaimed solemnly the civil equality of all the christian confessions without exception. This was precisely at the period when religious wars (with which Poland was never mixed up) devastated Europe, and the very same year in which the massacre of St. Bartholemew took place.”

blindness and obduracy of the people among whom they exercised their holy functions. The rulers of those lands invited their co-operation in the cause of religion and morality, and the astonishing fruits of their labours abundantly prove how wisely those statesmen acted, who considering that a faithful preaching of the gospel is more powerful, than penal enactments, in promoting social improvement, as well as those virtues of private life which ennoble and exalt the individual character, not only afforded all necessary assistance and encouragement to the zealous missionaries in the exercise of their pastoral duties, but even urged them to extend the sphere of their labours, and bless with their presence, those parts of their respective countries, which had not yet been favored to hear their apostolic preaching. When engaged in their Corsican mission, the Genoese Senate placed at their disposal, the Gallies of the State. And that noble minded Princess Christina, the daughter of Henry the Great of France, and Duchess Regent of Savoy, sent her chief ministers to their aid. These prudent statesmen succeeded, although not without difficulty, in composing the political troubles which impeded their mission in Piedmont. The envoys of the government could not at first prevail. But the magnanimous Duchess Regent finding that her meekness and charity were of no avail, deemed it advisable to threaten as a Sovereign. Thus, was brought about a cessation of civil strife; and the pious missionaries were enabled now to go abroad with safety, and enter the churches; the people attended in crowds. And thus, hearing, they could not long resist the power of the word of God. They were deeply moved and inclined to peace. In a few months, those people of Bra, who breathed only hatred and revenge, embraced one another in token of reconciliation. Nor was this the result of a superficial or transient feeling. Peace was permanently established, and so securely, that it became matter for remark, that none had ever witnessed such cordiality and union. The good Princess wrote to congratulate the missionaries on their success, and it is related that, on hearing from their own lips, a more detailed account of all that had occurred, she could not refrain from tears.

In Corsica, the men of peace were blessed with even greater victories. Time will not now admit of much detail. But one instance of their success is so edifying and instructive, that it cannot be withheld. Truly they understood on entering the valley of Niolo, that they had come among wild beasts, rather than to a community of civilized men. But, their meekness was not to be dismayed. It had been ordained that meekness should overcome strength,—gentleness ferocity. The mission of His disciples who came to call, not the virtuous, but the wicked to

repentance, was indeed to wolves, whilst they should be as the guileless lamb.

Niolo in Corsica is a valley nine miles in length surrounded by lofty and rugged mountains which render it exceedingly difficult of access. There is nothing to compare with it, either in Savoy or the Pyrenees. Such was the state of the roads leading to this mountain fastness, that in the days of St. Vincent, it offered a secure retreat to all the brigands and banditti of the Island. No dread of the officers of justice could deter them from committing robbery and murder at will, throughout the surrounding country. Such ignorance of spiritual things prevailed, that of the two thousand inhabitants of this valley, there were scarcely one hundred who knew the commandments of God and the Apostle's creed. Vice was to them as virtue, and revenge was held in such honor that the children were taught, as they learned the use of speech, that they must never allow the least offence to pass unpunished. Thus corrupted in their minds from infancy, by wicked counsel and still worse example, there was but little hope of reforming their morals. These unfortunate people lived in the habitual neglect of every religious duty, and persecuted one another in the most barbarous manner. It was their custom to wreak vengeance on their enemies by laying some great crime to their charge, and by causing them, through false witnesses, to be unjustly condemned. Such witnesses could be obtained, in any number, for money. And when their testimony was nullified by that of other witnesses, who also had their price, the accuser and the accused took justice into their own hands, and cruelly murdered one another. Concubinage, and even more crying disorders, were not uncommon. No fear of censures or excommunication availed, in the slightest degree, to check such evils.

This lamentable state of society appeared only to stimulate the zeal of the disciples of St. Vincent. "We had to re-establish peace," they write, "in a ferocious nation. *'Hic labor, hoc opus.'*" Our first efforts were entirely useless; and for fifteen whole days, we could gain but one young man, who pardoned another for having wounded him in the head by a pistol shot. All the rest were inflexible; and all that we could say, produced no effect on any one. Notwithstanding these bad dispositions, there was always a great crowd at the discourses which we delivered every day, morning and evening. Never was there a more alarming auditory. All the men attended in their customary dress, that is, with a sword at their side, and a gun on their shoulder. But, besides these arms, the banditti and other criminals had likewise two pistols, and two or three daggers in their belts. The spirit of vengeance so strongly possessed them, that the most moving exhortations

made no impression on the minds. Many, indeed, when we spoke of the pardon of injuries, left the Church. At length, on the eve of the day on which the general communion is usually made, as I was about to finish preaching, I once more exhorted those unfortunate people to forgive one another. God then inspired me to take in my hand the crucifix which I carried about me, and to tell the assembly, that those who were willing to shew mercy to their enemies, should come to kiss the feet of it. I conjured them to do so on the part of a dying SAVIOUR, who stretched out his arms towards them; and I told them that this homage, rendered to their Divine Lord, would be a proof of their determination to be reconciled with those who had offended them. At these words, they began to look at each other; but as no one stirred, I moved as if retiring, after having complained bitterly of their extraordinary obduracy. Upon this, a Monk of the reformed Order of St. Francis, impelled by a righteous and holy indignation, began to exclaim: 'O Niolo! unfortunate Niolo! Must you then perish, and incur the curse of God? You will not accept the grace which he sends to you by these missionaries who have come so far for your salvation.' He was still speaking, when a Parish Priest, whose nephew had been killed, came forward, prostrated himself on the ground, and asked to kiss the crucifix. Then calling by name, the murderer who was present, he said aloud: 'Let such an one approach, I must embrace him.' After this, another Priest did the same with regard to some of his enemies; and these two were followed by such a multitude, that for the space of an hour, nothing was to be seen but reconciliations and embracing. For greater security, the most important things were reduced to writing, and authenticated by a notary.

'What a lesson to mankind! What edification to the whole world! What joy in heaven!' exclaims the pious missionary to whom we are indebted for these details, 'to behold fathers and mothers pardoning for the love of God, the death of their children, children that of their parents, wives that of their husbands, brothers and relatives that of their nearest friends. What consolation to behold implacable enemies embrace one another, shedding floods of tears!' In Corsica, such things were little less than miraculous. The victory of the good missionaries was, indeed, complete.

The missions of St. Vincent to Ireland and the British Isles, were opposed by difficulties which arose from a very different source. By the people of those countries, who never fail to appreciate character, the disciples of St. Vincent were well received. But the favor which they met with, although it guarded them powerfully for a time, was finally no protection against the dark and heartless tyranny of the

day,—the fanatical rule of Cromwell. After having laboured with success, in the cause of their christian brethren and fellow-Catholics, the searching persecution of the "Lord Protector" overtook them at last, and they were driven from the country. But the religion which they taught remained. Beyond the power of persecution, by which it may be attacked indeed, but can never be destroyed, it received, every day, new development, and cast its roots deeper and deeper into the soil. If to this time, Ireland continues firmly attached to the Catholic faith, her children owe the boon, in great measure, to the considerate zeal of Vincent de Paul, who sent his pious brethren to console them, when writhing under the lash of Cromwellian oppression; and who sustained those charitable men, by words of comfort in their trials, and by the exercise of his influence through the political power of his country.

In Scotland, they had to contend, as regarded religion, against a new order of things, whilst they were exposed to the fury of "the Lord Protector's" jealous rule. So well, however, were they received, and so powerful was their preaching, that many were reunited to the "one fold," (Jn. 10, Eph. 4.) and in vast districts, which were blessed with the zealous labours of the children of St. Vincent, the Catholic faith is still the faith of the people. Several families of the highest rank were gained to the Catholic cause.* The representative of the ancient Island Kings, who still owned extensive possessions, resumed his place in the Church which had been the source of so many blessings to his ancestors. The Captaint of Clauranald who was the Lord

* The son of Glengarry†, (such was the designation of this important and powerful personage) had embraced the Catholic religion shortly before the arrival of the missionaries. In the correspondence of the Rev. Father Duiguin, Glengarry himself is mentioned as an aged man of ninety, who had followed the new doctrines from his youth. Father Duiguin and his companion instructed him, and reconciled him to the Church, during a sickness which soon brought him to the grave; but not until he had received the sacraments and manifested unspeakable joy at dying a Catholic. Father Duiguin also received into the Church several of Glengarry's domestics and some of his friends. The protection of this family is spoken of in Father Duiguin's correspondence as having been highly advantageous to him. They were beyond the reach of Cromwell's wrath, and at the restoration of the monarchy, they were loaded with favors.

† "God, through his all powerful mercy has effected wonders beyond all expectation; for he disposed the hearts so well, that Clauranald, Lord of a good part of the Island of Uist, was converted together with his wife, his son and all their family; and, the example has been followed by all the gentlemen, their vassals and families. (Father Duiguin's Letters to St. Vincent de Paul.)

The island of Uist here alluded to, contains a population of ten thousand souls. About the half of it, I believe, belonged to McDonald of Clauranald. All the people of this portion of the Island accepted the Catholic faith, with the exception of two men, who, "in order to sin more at their ease, wanted no religion."

Many other islands were visited—Canna, Eigg, Skia, or Sckye, an island about seventy-five miles in length, &c. The Island of Barra, the territory of the McNiel, afforded great conso-

† MacDonell of Glengarry.

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of several Islands and of large estates on the mainland, the Ducal family of Perth, together with gentlemen of lesser note, embraced the religion of Vincent de Paul. The preaching and apostolic labours of the devoted missionaries produced such a profound impression, imparted instruction so generally to the people, sustained, consoled and encouraged them, so powerfully, in the days of their severest trial, that flourishing missions were established and still (1865) exist in almost all those portions of the country, in which the disciples of St. Vincent exercised their pastoral duties. This is all the more remarkable that the wicked and persecuting government of "the Lord Protector" instructed the tribunals to harass and torment the good missionaries with frequent prosecutions. It would appear, however, that such unchristian conduct only tended to conciliate for them, the esteem and the good will, not only of Catholics, but of many who differed from them in matter of religion, whilst, in a great measure, it disarmed hostility amongst the people generally.* No doubt, the good Providence of God watches over his faithful servants. But, it does not always please Him to reward their services by happiness and good fortune in this life. If, therefore, it was not permitted that any evil should befall the disciples of St. Vincent, much must be ascribed to the proper feeling of the country, inversely proportionate as it was, with the narrow, faratical and cruel, but happily ephemeral tyranny of the time.

None will now be surprised to learn that the last prayer of Vincent de Paul was offered up in behalf of the association of learned and pious missionary Priests, who seconded so powerfully his zealous efforts in

lation to the Missionaries. Such was the people's eagerness for instruction, that it was enough for a child of each village to learn the Lord's Prayer, the Creed and the angelical salutation, for the whole village to know these prayers in two days. The principal persons of the place were received into the Church; amongst others, the young Lord, together with his brothers and sisters. Of the number of the converts, was the son of a minister, whose devotion edified the whole country where he was known. (Id.)

The inhabitants of this Island, as well as the people of Uist above referred to, are still (1865) faithful to the Catholic Church.

Many parts of the main-land, as well as the islands, were blessed by the apostolic labours of St. Vincent's disciples, such as the Counties of Moray, Sutherland, Ross, Cromarty, Caithness and the remote Orkneys.

* The Judges of the land were averse to prosecutions on the ground of religion. And such was the dislike of the people to such proceedings, that notwithstanding the exertions of the Cromwellian Government, it was scarcely possible to convict any one of the crime of being "habit and repute," a "Popish Priest." On one occasion that it was thought that a trustworthy witness had been found, the good man, when awakened to a sense of the evil which he was about to cause, refused to give evidence, excusing himself on the ground that he could not make up his mind to be "the ruin of an honest man." The "Lord Protector" at length, however, had recourse to more direct means of persecution, and notwithstanding the remonstrances that were made by the French Ambassador, on the representation of Vincent of Paul, compelled the friends of St. Vincent to leave the country.

the cause of religion and morality. His confidence in the Divine goodness,—in the ever watchful Providence of God,—remained unshaken, to the latest hour of his career on earth.

Summoning all the strength that remained to him after an exhausting illness of three days, in order to impart a final benediction to his pious brethren of an institution which was destined to perpetuate the most important of his works, he gave utterance to the following sentence, which, coming from such a man, and at such a solemn hour, was nothing less than prophetic: "QUI COEPIIT OPUS BONUM, IPSE PERFICIET."* With these words upon his lips, and the peace of Heaven in his soul, the holy servant of God departed to his rest and his reward. Thus did Vincent of Paul, in the eighty-fifth year of his age, on the 27th day of September 1660, resign into the hands of God, that life which he had spent in doing good,—in promoting, to the highest degree, it was in the power of any one man to promote, the improvement and happiness of mankind. It is superfluous to say that his funeral was honored by the tears of a grateful people, as well as by the unfeigned regret of the great and distinguished men of the beloved country for which he had laboured so faithfully and so long.†

Vincent de Paul was gone, and it was felt "that France and religion had lost a truly great man who was distinguished by the practice of every virtue." The monarch, (Louis XIV.,) now become so powerful, whom, when an infant, he had borne in his arms beside the death-bed of Louis "the Just," together with nine other Sovereign Princes, claimed for him the honors of canonization. The most eminent judges and statesmen declared "that his wisdom and charity were worthy of an apostle," and the first men of the age acknowledged, "that in affairs of the highest importance, he was quite their equal." Thirty-five pub-

* He who hath begun will complete the good work.

† The heart of St. Vincent was enshrined in a silver vase, and his corpse deposited in the centre of the choir of his Church of St. Lazarus. The Epitaph is as follows:

HIC JACET
VENERABILIS VIR
VINCENTIUS A PAULO
PRESBYTER, FUNDATOR SEU INSTITUTOR
ET PRIMUS SUPERIOR GENERALIS
CONGREGATIONIS MISSIONIS
NEONON
PUELLARUM CHARITATIS.
OBIIT DIE 27 SEPTEMBRIS ANNO 1660.

lie establishments which he had either created or restored, in the City of Paris, bore witness to his zeal. The most learned doctors testified "that, whilst in their youth, they had listened to his instructions, they believed that it was God himself who spoke to them." Fenelon and Flechier, together with eighty Bishops, bore the like honorable testimony. The different religious orders with one accord, proclaimed his praise. "It was impossible," said three assemblies of the clergy, at the head of whom was Cardinal de Noailles, "to restrain the piety of the faithful," who willed that the name of the humble Vincent should be inscribed in the diptychs of the Saints. The most eminent men of the time, as well as the most lowly, concurred in forwarding the canonization of the saintly man, who had given joy to the universal church by his charitable labours, and had won for his country, new and lasting fame. Such men as Cardinal de Perigord, and, the renowned Benedict XIV., known as yet, only, as Prosper Lambertini, labored in the cause, whilst a convict, to whom Vincent of Paul had imparted consolation and instruction, bore witness to his excellent virtue. This person, when informed that there was question of canonizing him, exclaimed: "O, I knew him well,—he was too humble, he will never suffer it." "This sublime defiance," observes the eloquent Cardinal Maury, "was heard in Heaven." The supreme authority pronounced. The memory of Vincent de Paul was beyond the reach of cavil, enshrined in the annals of the imperishable church; and his name which had already been written so long in the Book of Life, was inscribed in that record, more bright and more enduring than the most glorious page of earthly fame,—that record which passeth from generation to generation, and will only cease to be read, when there will no longer be a world to contain it, nor men by whom it can be perused. The French monarch Louis XV. worthily celebrated an event, so honorable to his country, by causing twelve Galley slaves to be restored to liberty. The French people, and all people who owned the Catholic name, hailed with rapture, the honors so worthily conferred on the Friend of humanity, the Apostle of Truth, the Light of his age, the Stay of weakness, the Father of the poor. The men of every clime rejoiced; for if Heaven descended Truth appeared to them, in their day, in all its essential excellence, and beauty, and fascinating loveliness, they owed the boon to SAINT VINCENT DE PAUL.

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ERRATA.

- Page 35—In third line efface *at* before *some*, and at the end of fourth line efface *at* before *this*.
- Page 50—(note)—read Madame de Motteville.
- Page 52—Second paragraph, for *in the presence of the Creator of Royalty itself*, read in the presence of the great,—of Royalty itself.

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